

## **Partnership Coordinator for Africa**

### **East Africa Visit**

**South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria.**

**11 October – 14 November 2022**



#### **Purpose of Visit:**

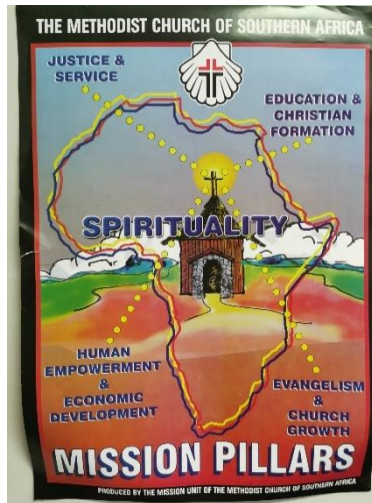
- **To meet with Church leaders in partner countries and build relationships.**
  - **To understand local context and current issues.**
  - **To visit partner churches and partner projects.**
    - **To meet with Mission partners ‘in situ’.**
      - **To share developments at MCB.**
  - **To discuss and share vision for future partnership.**
- **To join All We Can meeting with MCSA and Lesotho leaders in South Africa.**
  - **To attend All We Can Conference in Malawi.**
  - **To attend AATEEA Conference in Rwanda.**
- **To represent MCB at the Institution of the new Prelate in Nigeria.**

**Dr. Andrew Ashdown**

## SOUTH AFRICA 12 – 16 October 2022



**With Bishop Purity.**



**MCSA Mission Pillars.**

Programme:

Tuesday 11 October	Dep London Heathrow PM
Wednesday 12 October	Arrive Johannesburg 0705am Meeting with Bishop Purity & staff at Connexional Offices. Afternoon and Evening dinner with Mission Partners: Matthias and Annekathrin Buchold.
Thursday 13 October	Travel to Welkom. (4 hours) Meeting with Lesotho Leaders.
Friday 14 October	Return from Welkom to Johannesburg
Saturday 15 October	Visit to Apartheid Museum and Mandela Home in Soweto.
Sunday 16 October	Fly from Johannesburg to Blantyre, Malawi.

### **Introduction. (History notes from MCSA website).**

Methodism was introduced to South Africa by British soldiers stationed at the Cape, and the first missionary was appointed in response to an appeal from their leader, Sergeant John Kendrick. The Rev J McKenny arrived in 1814 but was refused permission to preach. He was followed in 1816 by the Rev Barnabas Shaw who defied the Governor and began to preach without permission. Before long he left Cape Town and settled among a group of Namaqua people about five hundred kilometres to the north. This became the springboard for further advance into modern Namibia, a venture which cost the lives of the Rev William Threlfall and his Nama companions, the Rev Jacob Links and Evangelist Johannes Jager who were murdered by their San guide.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the Methodist Mission spread northwards to Natal and during the gold rush to Witwatersrand where the city of Johannesburg was established. Missions also spread to Lesotho, Mozambique and southern Rhodesia.

The Church faced a major crisis once apartheid was implemented. Africans were not allowed to own land in the old Transvaal Republic and the missionaries had bought several farms to be

used as mission settlements. These were now declared “black spots” and had to be sold. However, the capital helped to erect a large number of churches and manses in Soweto and other areas affected by forced removals.

In 1883 the South African church became an Affiliated Conference and attained full independence in 1927. The grant from the British Church was reduced progressively and early in the twentieth Century the South African Conference was the only church, other than the Dutch Reformed Church, to receive no financial aid from overseas.

The Methodist Conference was consistent in its opposition to the policy of Apartheid between 1948 and 1994. Perhaps its boldest action was to elect the Rev Seth Mokitimi as President of the 1964 Conference in spite of the possibility that the Church would be declared to be black and deprived of its properties in white areas.

In 2015-16, the MCSA recognised and celebrated 40 years of ordaining women to the ministry of word and sacrament. In 2016-17, the MCSA celebrated 200 years of Methodism in Southern Africa.

More information about the history can be found on the Methodist Church of Southern Africa website.

### **Purpose of Visit.**

This visit to South Africa was organised by All We Can in order to discuss the implementation of a Church Can initiative to support Lesotho in sustainable capacity development in order for it to be ready to become a Synod of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Lesotho is currently a part of the Northern Free State District but historically and culturally, this structure needs changing and does not reflect the wishes of the people of the independent nation of Lesotho. This Church Can initiative was first discussed in 2019 and a ‘vision-casting’ workshop was held online in June 2020, after the onset of Covid prevented the intended in-person programme that had been proposed. The Vision workshop had proposed that a Vision and Mission Statement and Strategic Priorities be prepared through a consultation process in Lesotho, but the death of a bishop in Lesotho and the restrictions imposed by Covid severely restricted the continuation of the process.

This meeting was called to gather key figures from MCSA and from the Church in Lesotho to re-start the process. Due to political insecurities surrounding an election in Lesotho, the meeting was held in Welkom, three hours’ drive from Lesotho and four hours south of Johannesburg.

At a meeting beforehand in Johannesburg with Presiding Bishop of MCSA, Bishop Purity Malinga, Bishop Purity expressed her full support for Lesotho to attain greater independence. The matter of a Methodist ecclesiastical ‘split’ in Lesotho needs to be addressed, but MCSA are happy to take a conciliatory approach to this matter and seek a resolution to Methodist divisions within Lesotho.

The meeting held in Welkom unanimously agreed to move forward with the Church Can process. An online planning meeting will be held at the end of November, and a week's consultative visitation to Lesotho to speak with and consult with members of the churches in Lesotho will take place at the beginning of March 2023.



Lesotho Consultation. Welkom.

### **Apartheid Museum.**

On a free morning, I joined David Kalete from All We Can in visiting the Apartheid Museum and Mandela's House in Soweto.

The Apartheid Museum is a powerful reminder of the history, reality and impact of apartheid on the people of South Africa. And for me, it was a poignant reminder of childhood visits to South Africa from Zimbabwe at the height of apartheid during the 1970s. It is good to see that the museum is frequented by all South Africans. However, the legacy of Apartheid still remains in the social structures and tensions that exist in contemporary South Africa. Old prejudices and tensions were particularly evident in the Free State where we had our Lesotho meeting.



### **Meeting with Mission Partners, Annekathrin and Matthias Buchold. Johannesburg.**

Annekathrin and Matthias are joint Mission Partners between Methodist Church in Britain (MCB) and Evangel-Methodistische Kirche (EMK) in Germany. They arrived in South Africa in December 2021 to work under the mission unit of the MCSA. Their first months were spent settling into life in the country and observing the structures of the church. This included visits to children's homes, schools and community centres and also attending connexional meetings of the Youth Unit and the Music Association.

Annekathrin’s passion and ministry is centred around music. And her ministry in South Africa is to enable music to build community and nurture skills. Annkathrin is helping choirs to think about using their gifts as a means of supporting social projects in their circuits (such as community centres or childrens homes...).

Her projects focus on:

- Connecting young people from different backgrounds by musical participation.
- Music education and social growth (to develop the perception of others and oneself, expanding self-acceptance, active participation, self-confidence and reconciliation between people.
- Resource-oriented music support for children homes and care centres.
- Strengthening the connections between different congregations on a circuit level.

Annekathrin is achieving this through choir camps and weekends and workshops held across South Africa for musicians, conductors children’s ministries, digitalizing of musical heritage but particularly within Johannesburg. Her work is already bearing fruit.

Matthias is using his artistic skills to inspire expressions of hope and life within all contexts, especially the busy, urban South African environment. Finding his ‘niche’ has been more difficult for him than for Annkathrin, but he is finding a place for it. Meanwhile the children are very happy at their schools and enjoy life in South Africa.



## **MALAWI.**

Programme:

Sunday 16 October	Arrive Blantyre, Malawi.
Monday 17 October	All We Can International Conference begins.
Tuesday 18 October	Conference
Wednesday 19 October	Rural Community Visits.
Thursday 20 October	Conference.
Friday 21 October	Fly from Blantyre – Kigali, Rwanda.. Overnight Kigali.

## **All We Can Conference. Blantyre, Malawi.**

It was a privilege to join over 100 delegates from countries all over the world for the All We Can Conference – the first international conference in 5 years. The Conference was a celebration of the partnership and work undertaken with partner through All We Can and Church Can. During the Conference, parallel sessions were held with 15 church leaders from Africa, Europe, Asia and the Caribbean to assess and consider the work of ‘Church Can’ which supports churches in nurturing development, self-supporting projects and constructive partnership in particularly vulnerable areas of the world. During the conference, topics covered included: Principles of partnership; organizational resilience; De-colonising Aid; models of governance; leadership resilience and Sustainability.

Good partnership should:

- Be rooted in Christian faith but open and inclusive for all.
- Committed and long-term.
- Recognise that local people are best placed to create positive change in their own communities.
- Build resilience to better equip people to withstand and recover from disasters.
- Be flexible in implementation of policies and actions, listening to partners.
- Seek to develop self-sustaining initiatives, leadership and organizational resilience and focused on local identity.

“Local partners are the experts on their local context and are the most qualified persons to identify needs and priorities.”

The Church leaders affirmed the importance of the ‘Church Can’ initiative for supporting and encouraging local churches and how helpful this had been where it had been implemented in Sierra Leone and India. Currently, ‘Church Can’ are undertaking a major consultation with the Methodist Church in Lesotho to assist the process towards greater autonomy for the church there.

## **Visit to Rural projects in Malawi, supported by All We Can and Church Can.**

It was a huge privilege to be taken to visit a number of Community Development Projects in the Chikwawa District of southern Malawi, 90 minutes south west of Blantyre. Church leaders were invited to visit the ‘Eagles Projects’, which include a church-led Child Care Centre; a Church and Community response initiative to enhance community development and self-sustainability; an afforestation project; educational support for children; and support for vulnerable elderly persons.

The project involves mobilizing churches to become community development facilitators in their communities and has been transformative for those villages where it has been implemented. Church and community leaders are trained to work together to nurture self-sustainable community development initiatives that are developed and resourced locally nurturing and maximizing the skills and resources that are already available. By doing so, community members have been inspired to realise their potential and initiate income-generating projects that are serving both their families and communities. Additionally, through nurture a cooperative system in the villages, local church and community leaders have helped

supply educational materials; planted over 1000 trees; provided basic needs such as food and soap, and helped construct new homes for some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in their communities. Most notably, all church denominations, community council leaders, village chiefs and community members have been trained to work together to discern the most appropriate and effective means of serving and developing their communities. The results have been astonishing and transformative for all who have taken part. The whole project is based on a few simple questions: What are the problems we face? What might be the solutions to resolving those problems? What human and material resources do we have that we can use to their maximum effect to help resolve the difficulties we face?



Consultation with Eagles Community members, Malawi. Church and community leaders and chiefs are all included to discuss challenges and solutions that can be resolved locally.

This rural village had no pre-school. Following the training, the mothers, in collaboration with church and community leaders, got together to start a pre-school in an unused building. The pre-school and child-care centre is staffed entirely by volunteers from the village and run by the local community. There are currently 95 children on the roll. Villagers take it in turns to teach and look after the children, and work in the fields.



Though this is not a World Mission Fund-supported initiative, it represents a very good example of the kind of Community Development Process that is both needed and effective across Africa, and is something that MCB consider encouraging and being a part of in the future.

#### **Primary conclusions from visit to Malawi:**

- The Conference was an All We Can/Church Can event.
- The impact of All We Can/Church Initiatives is profound at a local level and much appreciated by all those with whom All We Can are partnered.

- The model of All We Can/Church Can support and enabling and nurturing sustainable community development is one that is well worth supporting and following.
- Church Can principles have been warmly endorsed by the global Church leaders who have been engaged with them.
- The relationship between All We Can and MCB is important to both organisations and continued engagement/consultation/mutual support will be important for the future work of both.
- All We Can are keen to have a conversation with Global Relationships in the New Year about the future and whether there is any way that the principles/benefits of Church Can initiatives can further ‘feed’ into future programmes/initiatives undertaken by Global Relationships.

## RWANDA

Programme:

Friday 21 October	Arrive Kigali
Saturday 22 October	Drive from Kigali to Kibagoro College & Hospital (5 hr drive). Visit Kibagoro College. Overnight in lodge nearby.
Sunday 23 October	Drive from Kibagoro to Murambi Genocide Museum. Visit ARI graduate and Dafatunye Community project, Nyanza. Drive from Nyanza to Kigali.
Monday 24 October	AATEEA Conference, Kigali.
Tuesday 25 October	Conference
Wednesday 26 October	Conference.
Thursday 27 October	Drive from Kigali to Kirehi, Rwanda. (4 hours)
Friday 28 October	Drive from Kirehi, Rwanda to Mwanza, Tanzania. (10 hours)



### **Kibagoro Polytechnic.**

Situated on the shores of Lake Kivu in South West Rwanda, Kibagoro is a small lakeside town with a well-known hospital and Polytechnic. Kibogora Polytechnic was established in 2011 and is the first university-level institution to be centred in the Western Province of Rwanda. It is owned by the Free Methodist Church of Rwanda and welcomes students of all faiths and none. The Polytechnic houses Faculties of Business and Development Studies, Education, Health Sciences and Theology.



MCB is delighted that in January 2023, Revd Dr. Wendy Kilworth-Mason will be travelling to join the staff as a Mission Partner.



Kibagora Polytechnic



College buildings above Lake Kivu



Staff Accommodation.

**All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association (AATEEA) Conference. Kigali.**

Attended by over 50 Theological Educators from different churches across Africa, it was a privilege to attend the All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association Conference in Kigali. Theological Education by Extension in Africa began in Zambia and has expanded across the Continent. Given the challenges and cost of traditional theological education to most Africans, Theological Education by Extension provides an effective and more accessible alternative to more traditional methods of education for many who wish to pursue theological education and training, especially given the financial and practical limitations and challenges experienced by many African communities. Many churches are discovering the benefits of this approach. The Conference acknowledged that both academic and practical theological training methods are important for theological formation. Each contribute to the other and are not exclusive of each other. A mutual respect for different approaches to theological education was urged and encouraged for church leaders and educators.

Theological Education by Extension provides a less formal and practically-based approach to Theological Education. The contrasting approaches are set out in general terms as follows:

	<b>Traditional Educational methods</b>	<b>Education by Extension</b>
<b>Starting point</b>	Content	Learner’s needs
<b>Qualifications of teachers</b>	Scholarship	Ministry competence
<b>Teaching philosophy</b>	Pedagogy – Lecture by professor	Andragogy. Discussion, Self-directed learning.
<b>Expected Result</b>	Degree	Increased skill
<b>Expectation of Student</b>	Rote memory to pass test	Performance
<b>Location</b>	Campus	Church or home
<b>Descriptors</b>	Preparation for ministry	Equipping in context of ministry
<b>Assessment</b>	By teacher	By learner of his/her community
<b>Timing</b>	Determined by curriculum	Life-long
<b>Cost</b>	Often very expensive	Often minimal expense.

The Conference addressed the methods and challenges of Theological Education by Extension and expressed the need to combine practical excellence with academic diligence.

Advantages of this approach were expressed as follows: Theological Education by Extension is not about receiving a certificate of qualification but about imparting knowledge. It tends to transform persons and be more relevant and more accessible. There should therefore be a parity of esteem between this more informal approach to theological education and the more formal, traditional approach. Each has their own value and should work together. For each helps the church. Whilst formal education produces highly qualified people, non-formal education tends to produce more holistic, relevant ministers. It enables the church to speak to the issues affecting the community, to be relevant to global issues, and to be a voice of hope for all.

It was very interesting to see how enthusiastic the participants and church leaders present were for this developing style of theological training. Discussing the matter with church leaders around the Continent, interest in Theological Education by Extension is growing across the Continent and is something for which MCB support and encouragement is appreciated.

### **Villages of Hope. Dufatanye Organisation. Nyanza. Central Rwanda.**

The Methodist Church in Britain has been proud to support placements at the Asian Rural Institute in Japan, which brings together rural leaders from around the world as a place of learning and community to build a better, sustainable world and provides training programmes in agriculture and community development. I was so pleased to be put in touch with one of ARI's graduates, Sailove Saidath, a SALT student supported by the WMF, who has been undertaking transformative rural development work in central Rwanda with the Dufatanye Organisation – an ecumenical organization dedicated to improving the lives of the rural poor and developing sustainable projects for community development and improvement.



Home gardens.



Rabbits fertilizing fish ponds.



Fruit tree nursery.

Dufatanye Organization ([www.dufatanye.org](http://www.dufatanye.org)) began as an association in 2003 and later became a Non-Governmental Organization in Rwanda. The SALT student supported by the World Mission Fund, Sailove Saidtah was one of the seven founding members. It is their vision to help the large number of people affected by malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, Genocide and poverty in rural communities. This has been achieved through the Village of Hope Programme where kitchen gardens are constructed for individual families, capacity building training programmes are provided for villagers, chickens and fruit trees are given to every household in the village and good agricultural practices are taught. Attitudes to people with HIV and disability have been transformed through community training and inclusion initiatives and dozens of new homes and improvements to homes have been completed for the most vulnerable in these

villages. Teaching and training in making traditional crafts out of recycled materials have also developed income-generating activities. This is all work that has directly benefited from the skills received through the support given by MCB to Sailove who is instrumental in developing and expanding these ministries in Rwanda.



Genocide survivor  
Whose home was rebuilt and given  
A garden plot for income generation.



HIV holder  
whose home was rebuilt.  
And given a garden plot for income  
Generation.



Genocide survivor whose homewas  
Rebuilt and provided with chickens  
and a cow for income generation.

These initiatives have transformed the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in these rural communities and also transformed farming practices. So much so, that one village's farm is now producing marketable levels of fruit, livestock produce, vegetables, fish and fruit trees. In addition, the organization has built a playground in one of the villages, using recycled materials and this has improved children's behavior and enabled family participation in play. Meanwhile, the impact is so significant for those villages that have participated, that Sailove is hoping to expand her work and offer training opportunities elsewhere in Rwanda.



Planting a tree at Dufatanye.



Avocado plantation with Sailove.



Village playground.

### Primary conclusions from visit to Rwanda:

- Importance of partnership through education.
- It is clear that the ARI programme has a profound impact on those individuals who have been funded by MCB to participate, and through them a transformative impact on the agricultural and community development programmes with which they are subsequently involved in their home countries.
- Is there a way in which that link with ARI can be maintained in whatever networks or initiatives continue beyond 2024?

- Importance of less formal contextual practical theology training. More engagement needed between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ theological education and more reflection/encounter needed between ‘western’ theological traditions and Global theological reflection.
- Sustainable community development becoming a primary missional goal for churches across Africa and work needed to provide theological reflection on this approach. This is a significant area where constructive future partnership and engagement might take place.

## TANZANIA

### Programme:

Friday 28 October	Arrive Mwanza. Dinner with Bishop Ndaki & Peter Kasululu.
Saturday 29 October	Travel to Katoro Methodist Church. (3 hours). Return to Magu. (5 hours)
Sunday 30 October	Preach at Magu Church and lay foundation stone of extension. Meet with District Staff. Evangelists and Ministers. Women’s fellowship.
Monday 31 October	Travel to Nyashimba. Meet with Disabled people
Tuesday 1 November	Visit Secondary School at Nyashima. Women’s dispensary at Kabita and Lakeside. Visit disabled ministry at Kabita. Travel to Sanga village to lay foundation stone. Travel to Bariadi to lay foundation stone. Night at Bunda.
Wednesday 2 November	Visit Methodist community under a tree at Nyamatoke. Travel across Serengeti to Ngorongoro.
Thursday 3 November	Ngorongoro to Arusha. Evening flight from Kilimanjaro to Nairobi, Kenya.



### Introduction.

The Methodist Church in Tanzania is under the authority of the Methodist Church in Kenya from which it was carved in 1986. The Church became a full Synod in 2011. The Church began with volunteer missionaries operating in the Magu District of the Mwanza region by Lake Victoria where the Church is still centred today. However, the Church has since

extended to Arusha, Mara, Simiyu and Geita. The ministry of the Methodist Church in Tanzania has been effective because of the partnership that has existed between local indigenous communities and the evangelists from outside Tanzania who planted the churches. The church has a focus on rural mission and, being a small church, faces challenges in finding sufficient human and financial resources to fulfil its ministries. Nevertheless, the church is growing and more churches are being planted. It was a privilege during my short stay to lay the foundation stones for three new churches/extensions in villages in Magu District. As the church is based in rural areas, many of the ministries are associated with the agricultural sector and seek to enhance sustainable community development initiatives.

### **Ministries of Hope with people with disability in Rural Tanzania.**

It was an inspiring experience to spend a few days visiting the Methodist Church in Tanzania in the region of Lake Victoria. This is a rural area of mostly subsistence farmers and this year, like most of East Africa, the region has experienced a devastating drought that has meant that crops have not been able to be planted and as a consequence there is a real fear of famine next year.

The Methodist Church of Tanzania is a Synod under the Methodist Church of Kenya. It is centred on the lakeside Magu District of Northern Tanzania, but extends across much of northern Tanzania and as far south as Arusha. The Church has 19 Ministers, 45 Local Preachers and close to 4000 members, mostly scattered across the rural areas of the region.

The vision of the MCT is to bring holistic transformation to these rural communities and enhance capacity building for strengthening the church's presence in the region. It was a privilege to lay the foundation stones for three rural churches during my visit.

Amongst these ministries is a remarkable ministry to people with disabilities, for which MCB were able to source some funding earlier in 2022 from the Pollock Trust. Funds from the WMF have also contributed towards this work. In many African societies, disability is a taboo subject and people with disabilities often face marginalization within their communities and even within their families. The Methodist Church in Tanzania has initiated a project that seeks to:

- Transform the lives of people with disability by:
- Changing attitudes within society towards disability through training and working with disabled persons and their families and communities.
- Providing basic needs for persons with disability to enable them to live.
- To provide skills and resources to enable persons with disability to establish their own micro-businesses.

Let me introduce some of those who have benefited. (Their pictures and information are shared with permission).

- Mariam Emmanuel experiences impaired movement in her hands and feet, and also has a mental health condition. With the contributions provided by the local church, she has been able to develop a small business, the profit of which has enabled her to sustain her own income.

- Laurencia Doto has significant hand and shoulder impairment. Since being supported by the local church she has been able to begin a small business selling charcoal and the profit is enabling her to live. She is immensely grateful for the support.
- Sophia Bonzare is deeply thankful for all the support that she has been given. She had been having difficulty even getting enough food to eat each day, but with the help provided, she has been able to support herself, start a small vegetable plot and a small business selling fish from the lake. She humbly requests that the support can continue.
- Pascal Simon has difficulty walking and has Diabetes. With the support provided, he is now growing chickens which he is using both to feed himself and to sell for income. This has been life-transforming for him.
- Leokadia, has a mental health condition and is also deaf. With the support provided, her mother Antonia has been able to start purchasing and selling maize to the community and earning a small living to support her daughter. It has transformed both their lives and she is deeply grateful.
- Mariam has a speech impairment and had been marginalized by the community. With support given, she has started a charcoal business. She is now able to take care of her child and herself and the attitude of the community towards her has completely changed. Mariam is a faithful Christian and walks 10km to church and back each Sunday in order to join in worship.
- Victor, the child in the chair had been excluded from school because he had to be carried everywhere until the church were able to provide a chair for him and offer his family some basic support. Now Victor has been welcomed back into school and his family have started a small business. The challenge for them now is that the only secondary school that can take him is too far to travel to, so the family need to find the means to enable him to board.



Mariam Emmanuel.



Pascal Simon.



Victor.



Sophia Bonzare.

The following persons are from another village:

- Sophia is immensely grateful to the Church for its support. She has started a fish-selling business in the village and people are viewing her and people with disabilities with different eyes.
- Elizabeth says: “The support has really helped me and I thank God that the Church has remembered me. Before, there was nothing I could do, but now I am contributing to the community and am respected by people.”

- The mother of Elkana, says their lives have been transformed by the support given for Elkana. The mother, Penda, now sells coffee to make an income and this has been so successful that she wishes to start a small coffee house in the village.
- Jessica says that she could not have imagined the blessings that the support would bring her. She has been able to set up a small groundnut business and can now support herself.
- Makoyo has started a sugarcane business and has bought seven chickens. He says: “Life has completely changed. Before I was begging, but now I have a life of my own and can take care of myself. People now treat me with respect. I am so grateful for the support.”

All these people speak of the transformation of attitudes within their community and of now being respected in their own right. One young woman said that she no longer has to sit on the floor in a corner when she enters a house, but is given a chair and a place at table with others. This is a direct result of both the training the church has provided to the local communities and to each of the individuals.

It is inspiring to see such missional initiatives being undertaken with minimal resources in communities that struggle to sustain themselves. Please remember the Methodist Church of Tanzania in your prayers.

### **The impact of Climate Change in Tanzania.**

Whilst visiting Methodist Church communities in the Lake Victoria region of rural Tanzania earlier this month, the impact of climate change is acutely evident. A terrible drought is affecting Africa, from the Horn of Africa all the way to Mozambique. The rains of 2022 have failed to materialise. The land is parched and farmers have been unable to plant crops let alone harvest them which leaves serious concerns of widespread famine in the year ahead.

Whilst visiting church communities, I was taken to one village where the water supply is literally no more than a puddle – not unusual for the area. Women from the surrounding villages wait for many hours around the water hole – their only supply of drinking, cooking and washing water – for the water to seep to the surface, but most walk back to their homes with empty buckets. A borehole would solve the problem for the surrounding area, but a borehole costs in the region of £10,000 – a sum that neither the villagers nor the local church can afford. Since my visit, the World Mission Fund Grants Committee has agreed a grant to fund a borehole for the village.



An hours' journey away, I joined fishermen on the shore of Lake Victoria. Fish are a vital source of nourishment in this area, especially with the impact of the drought.



Fisherman on the shores of Lake Victoria.



Fields empty of crops at harvest time.

The church is striving to support local communities, particularly in income-generation initiatives to improve livelihoods for all. However, the provision of boreholes would transform the lives of local people and hugely expand capacity to grow and harvest crops. Let us pray for all seeking to improve lives in the region, and that international attention might be forthcoming in the face of the looming consequences of drought across the Continent.

### Visits to Churches.

The Methodist Church in Tanzania sees itself as a Missionary Church serving some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in rural Tanzania. Its priorities include capacity building in strengthening Christian communities; promoting and supporting income generating activities to enhance sustainable economic development; addressing issues of gender violence and inequality and rights for people with disabilities and HIV, and ensuring quality education and social services for rural communities.

### Kaboro Church.

Two hours west of Mwanza, I was taken to visit the Methodist congregation at Kaboro. The church was planted in 2017 with just 6 adults and 12 children, and now has 96 members, including 45 adults and 51 children. The Rev. Immanuel Rubacha, the General Secretary of the Church of Tanzania is Superintendent of the Magu Circuit and the Pastor of this Church in the Geita Region is Paul Safare. The Church is the first to be planted in this region and already has a flourishing women's fellowship and Bible Study group. The Church building is incomplete and half the funds have so far been raised for completion. During my visit, the first rain storm of the season (2 months late) occurred. There has been a terrible drought this year and when the rain started, the people erupted in shouts of praise. Sadly, the heavy rain-shower was short-lived, but it was for the people a sign of hope.





### Magu Methodist Church.

Magu is the founding Methodist Church in Tanzania. It was a privilege to join Bishop Ndaki for Sunday worship there and to be invited to lay the foundation stone of an extension to the Church to cater for the growing congregation.



### Magu Dispensary.

The Dispensary opened in 2012 and currently has 5 staff. It serves 10 -20 patients a day and has a catchment area of about 2000 people. Extension work for the facilities has begun but resources are limited. Currently, the clinic are providing only out-patient care, but the staff are wishing to provide in-patient and maternity clinic services.



### Sanga Methodist Church.

Two hours south of Mwanza, deep in the rural area, I visited a small village where no white man had ever been seen and a Methodist congregation of 27 Adults and 21 children, which was planted in 2011 with just 5 members. The Church has purchased a plot of land and started to build a church, but do not have the funds to complete the building. I was invited to lay the foundation stone before being invited to lunch in the chief's house with his family. Despite the many challenges, the congregation were full of vibrant faith and hope. It was humbling to be told that the children had refused to go to school because they had never seen a white man and wanted to meet me!



## Bariedi Methodist Church.

A further one hour south of Sanga, we visited another church on the edge of a sizeable market town. This had been started in 2018 with just 7 people, but is now a thriving congregation of 40 adults and 60 children with a large youth group and a growing church. In 2020 the members had bought a plot of land on the edge of town and had managed to build the shell of a church, but this needs completion. Once again, I was invited to lay the foundation stone. The very dynamic minister is hoping to complete the church in the coming year.



## Nyamatoke.

One of the most special visits of my time with the Methodist community of Tanzania was with the small Methodist congregation of Nyamatoke. Nyamatoke is a tiny rural village, south east of Bunda near Lake Victoria, and overlooking the Serengeti National Park. This small congregation was planted in 2001. It now consists of just 26 members and has met for the last 20 years under a tree. All the members are subsistence farmers and despite the material poverty of the members, they all try to do what they can to serve and witness to the love of Christ for their fellow villagers. I told them that they were very close to Jesus and that meeting under a tree on a regular basis must have been something that Jesus would have done regularly with his disciples during his journeys around Palestine. They would love to have a place to worship but no resources to do so, but nevertheless they remain faithful to worship in their chosen place and are filled with a sense of Christian love and peace which was inspiring to witness.



## Conclusions from visit to Tanzania:

- This is a truly missional ministry of the Methodist Church in Africa, serving the most vulnerable.
- Multiple challenges, particularly in resources, but full of human enthusiasm, faith, vision and commitment.
- Climate change is having a major impact on the environment and on human livelihoods. This is increasingly a significant issue for communities and churches to address.

- Supporting and encouraging sustainable development and income generating initiatives are becoming a major priority for the Churches in Africa.
- As an ‘outsider,’ one question, as elsewhere in Africa, might be: is the Church trying to over-reach capacity? Might it be better to prioritise those things that are within capacity and do them well? Growth will occur through successful completion and application of ministries that are within capacity.



With Bishop Ndaki (Right) and Brother Peter Kasululu, Programme Director of Community Based Rehabilitation.

## KENYA

Thursday 3 November	Arrive Nairobi. Overnight Nairobi Airport Hotel.
Friday 4 November	Drive from Nairobi to Meru. (5 hours) Dinner with Bishop Joseph Ntombura (Presiding Bishop) And Prof. Jane Leach. Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge.
Saturday 5 November	All day. Graduation Ceremony. Kenya Methodist University. Late afternoon. Drive to Maua Hospital. Dinner with Mission Partner Claire Smithson and The Hospital Director.
Sunday 6 November	Attend Church at Maua. Tour of Maua Hospital. Meeting with Claire Smithson. Return to Meru.
Monday 7 November	Drive from Meru to Aberdare National Park.
Tuesday 8 November	Day off. Aberdare National Park.
Wednesday 9 November	Drive from Aberdare National Park to Nairobi. Lunch with Mission Director & Finance Director, Kenya
Thursday 10 November	Meeting with Bishop Joseph. Lunch with Professor Ogara Meeting with General Secretary of AACC.
Friday 11 November	Bishop Joseph. PM. Fly from Nairobi to Lagos, Nigeria.



## **Introduction.**

This was an unexpected visit to Kenya. I had planned to return to UK after the visit to Tanzania, but an invitation to Nigeria (see below) necessitated a week's extension in Kenya. Given a number of issues facing the Methodist Church in Kenya and Uganda, this was a good opportunity to meet some of the leaders within the Connexion; meet with our Mission Partner, Claire Smithson at Maua Hospital, and prepare for a later formal visit early in 2023.

## **Kenya Methodist University (KeMU) Graduation 2022.**

The timing of my visit to Kenya coincided with the Kenya Methodist University Graduation Ceremony in Meru, Mt Kenya, to which I was invited. It was a privilege to attend.

Kenya Methodist University (KeMU) is a Christian chartered private university. It was founded by the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK). The Church first established Kaaga Rural Training Centre for training the community in Agriculture and later the Methodist Training Institute (MTI), which became a centre for training Ministers for the Methodist Church. In 1984, the Church decided to establish a university in Kaaga, Meru. In 1995, the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) made an inspection visit of the proposed university and later in June 1997, granted a Letter of Interim Authority to establish Kenya Methodist University. KeMU became a chartered university in June 2006 upon being granted a Charter by President Mwai Kibaki.

Today, Kenya Methodist University is a Chartered Christian University, with the main campus situated in Meru and other campuses at Nairobi and Mombasa. KeMU offers PhD, Masters, Degree, Diploma and Certificate programmes. There are nearly 8000 students from all over the world undertaking studies in 28 departments. Market driven courses, industry linkages and opportunities outside the classroom provide positive career outcomes for the students in their chosen fields. The University is highly regarded internationally and nationally in Kenya and has over 32,000 alumni around the world. The University is the first and only private university in Kenya to graduate medical doctors.

The Graduation Ceremony, whose chief guest was Rev. Dr. Jane Leach, Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge, saw the graduation of hundreds of students for the year 2022 and was broadcast live on national television. I was also invited to speak and passed on greetings from MCB and the Global Relationships Team. The emphasis of all the speeches was on the importance of applying what has been learned in students' various fields for the benefit of society.



With Bishop Joseph & Jane Leach

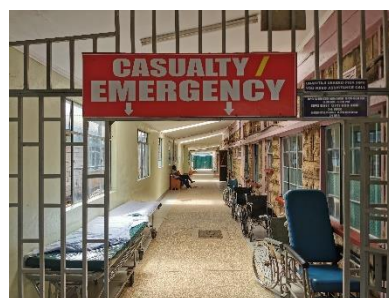
## **Maua Hospital. Mission Partner: Claire Smithson.**

It was a joy to meet with longstanding Mission Partner, Claire Smithson at Maua Hospital, where she has ministered for over 20 years. The hospital serves a wide catchment area. After starting in paediatrics, Claire has worked in many departments and has made a huge contribution to the work and development of the hospital. In recent years, Claire's specialization has been in palliative care and she has discovered a gift for training, both nurses and ministers in palliative care. This is now taking up a major part of her time and her training skills in this field are being used more widely in Kenya.

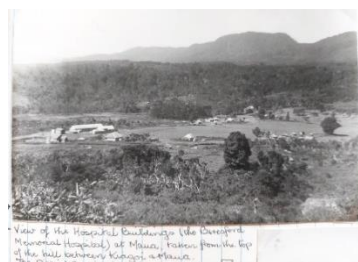
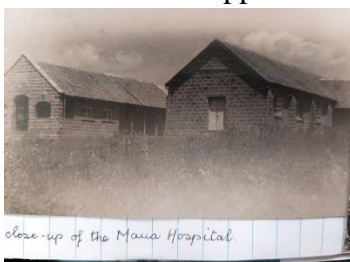
It was a pleasure to spend one night at the Hospital Guest House and to have a tour of the hospital with the hospital administrator, Mr. Marete, who is proving instrumental in the ongoing ministry and development of the hospital. The hospital has recently appointed a good finance controller, an excellent HR manager and a retired Bishop who has been appointed lead Chaplain. The hospital now has 350 staff including 7 senior medical consultants, 6 fully qualified doctors, 80-90 nurses and 14 laboratory certified clinical staff. The biggest expense of the hospital is purchasing and sourcing medicines.

The five year Strategic plan for the Hospital from 2019-2024 includes:

- Increasing the number of patients by diversifying services and improving patient care.
- Encouraging and motivating staff to stay longer.
- Developing financial stability and financial management efficiency.
- Improving accessibility and keeping costs low for the local community.
- Enhancing the spiritual development of staff.



Whilst in Maua, it was wonderful and poignant to be contacted by a childhood friend whose grandfather was the Methodist Minister in Meru, Kenya (and later at Thekwane Mission, Zimbabwe) in the 1920s and 1930s. She sent pictures of the hospital and some of the local ministries at the time, the places of which are all known and recognized by local staff today. Just a few of the pictures are presented below. There are quite a few more which caused much excitement and appreciation in Maua and Meru.





Same building as above.. 2022.



Rev. Arthur Cozens. Minister Meru (and Thekwane, Zimbabwe) 1920s-30s.

### **Methodist Church Kenya Staff meeting.**

It was good to meet with the following:

- Bishop Joseph Ntombura in Nairobi and Meru.
- Rev. Martin Gikunda. Director of Humanitarian Relief and Church Development.
- Kinya Naituli. Mission Fund Administrator.
- Other Methodist Church staff.

Notwithstanding the current challenges being faced in the Methodist Church in Kenya, the key priorities of the Church are capacity building for all Districts, the improvement of livelihoods for all communities, and Christian education and theological training. Like Tanzania, Kenya is a Missional Church with inspiring grassroots ministries, particularly in remote mission areas.



With Bishop Ntombura (Right) & Rev. Martin Gikunda.



Residents of Nairobi National Park.

### **Meeting at All Africa Council of Churches Headquarters. Nairobi. With AACC General Secretary: Rev. Dr. Mwombeki Rwezahula Fidon.**

It was good to meet with the General Secretary of the All Africa Council of Churches in Nairobi, Rev. Dr. Mwombeki Fidon.

Speaking of Africa generally, he identified the following:

## **Greatest strengths** of the Churches in Africa:

- Increased independence – ecclesiological, theological and financially. Few churches are still dependent on support from outside Africa.
- Africans are still religious, therefore the churches can still influence society.
- The numbers of Christians are huge. This is an advantage in terms of influence and potential.

Rev. Dr. Fidon, speaking from an African perspective, sees the **main priorities** for the Church in Africa as follows:

- Theological engagement. Identifying positive theologies that address issues of health, wealth, poverty, injustice and healing. (A modern African liberation theology).
- Need to address issues of power, authority and poverty.
- Need to address and challenge the role of governments in legislating on religious issues.
- Need to encourage sustainable population growth.
- Need to address issues of economic, social and national justice.
- Addressing the consequences of Climate Change.
- Need to strengthen Ecclesial Leadership Development and Capacity.
- Need to address issues of tribalism.
- Need to challenge injustice issues in the Holy Land and the theological implications of the way Israel is viewed in many African churches.

## **NIGERIA**

### **Purpose of Visit.**

My visit to Nigeria was to attend the Investiture of the new Methodist Prelate of the Methodist Church in Nigeria: Most. Rev. Dr. Oliver Ali Aba and the Consecration and Investiture of 30 new Bishops. The latter took place on Saturday 12 November, 2022 in a service at the Methodist Church of the Trinity, Tinibu, Lagos lasting 7 hours. The Investiture of the new Prelate by the outgoing Prelate, Most Revd Dr. Samuel ‘Emeka Kanu Uche, took place the following day, 13 November in a service lasting 5 hours. I attended as the representative of MCB following an invitation from Bishop Rt. Rev Dr. Babtunde Taiwo, who was also Instituted as the new Secretary of Conference for the Methodist Church in Nigeria at the Consecration Service on 12 November.



Waiting in vestry with Archbishops.



Consecration of Bishops.



With Very Rev. Awe. GS of AMC.

I only spent 2 days in Nigeria attending these services. Main impressions are:

- A dynamic ambitious, confident church that seeks to grow and be as influential in Nigeria as its Anglican and Catholic counterparts.
- The Consecration of 30 Bishops was the largest consecration ever undertaken in Nigeria.
- I was warmly welcomed by the Bishops and Archbishops and politely welcomed by both the outgoing and incoming Prelates. For both services, I was invited to be robed and seated in the sanctuary with the Archbishops.
- During the event, the new Prelate expressed publicly concern at MCB's decision to allow same-sex marriage in church, where the Church Council agrees to this. However, he did add that the friendship with MCB will always remain steadfast.



Consecration of Bishops.



Enthronement of new Prelate.



Bishop Taiwo, Secretary of Conf.

### **Meeting with Very Rev. Awe. General Secretary of Africa Methodist Council.**

I had a fruitful 2 hour meeting with Very Rev. Awe on the matter of the proposal for the creation of a Mission Fund for Africa. Rev. Awe is very aware of the multiple concerns expressed across Africa about the proposal and is working with the Executive to try and prepare a draft Constitution to assuage some of the concerns. Further consultations are due to take place over the Christmas period and into the new year.

### **Hymn Singing at Parish Church in Lagos.**

After all the formalities of the Consecrations, it was wonderful to be taken to a thriving Parish Church in Lagos which was having a lay-led community Hymn singing service. The Church is well attended by professional people in the city and supports an enormous amount of social work in Lagos and across Nigeria.





## Summary.

This was a whirlwind 5-week visit across Africa taking in South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and Nigeria, including two international conferences on Sustainable Community Development and Contextual Theological Training.

The following are some of my conclusions:

- Grassroots sustainable community development work is at the core of some of the most faithful ministries amongst our Methodist partners, and represent a vital part of the future for the ministry of the Church if we are to witness to and offer life, hope and love for God's people.
- Contextual theology is a vital part of theological training and an ongoing 'dialogue' between 'traditional' and less formal approaches to theological training and development will significantly enhance the ministry of the church, particularly in isolated and rural areas.
- There is a huge diversity of capacity between our Methodist partners across Africa. It is very important that we continue to offer meaningful ways of partnership to all Connexions, not least the more vulnerable ones in the future.
- There may be a danger of 'over-reach/over-stretch' in some churches.
- Our Mission partners make a vital contribution to the work of our partners overseas. They represent an invaluable 'bridge' between the host church and the church in Britain.
- All our partners remain very keen to continue a meaningful relationship and partnership with MCB in the future and are keen to be a part of the conversation into what that will look like and how it can be developed and enhanced.



Since this photograph was taken of women at an empty water source in Tanzania, a grant for a Borehole for this same village has been approved.