

# Mission Partners' Retreat at Entebbe, Uganda

27 July - 4 August 2018

## Aims of the Mission Partner retreat

- Support the fellowship and networking of MCB- CoS mission partners serving in Africa
- Promote reflection, relaxation and replenishing of mission partners with their families outside usual mission stations
- Offered opportunities for exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences in a safe environment
- Opportunity to visit new sites together as a group and experience Uganda Christianity



MCB mission partners with families members serving in Africa & Caribbean

## Preparations for the retreat

Rev Dr Tom Kisitu, a former Methodist minister now serving with the Church of Scotland was the Chaplain during the retreat. He departed from Edinburgh we met at Amsterdam, and we both arrived at Entebbe on the same flight. We both organised the tours and visits however Tom contacted the special speakers. We also had different Uganda Christian

groups that ministered to us to experience contextual worship. MC Uganda including Freddy and Dee, serving mission partners liaised with me to provide the venue, meals and halls. It was great to have Freddy and Dee join us the next morning to finalise arrangements at Nicon Resort and welcome mission partners from South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria and Benin.

## Arrival of mission partners with families

It was an early start on Friday 27 July. Tom and Freddy were on the shuttle services to the airport to welcome our guests. The airport was about thirty to forty five minutes' drive (subject to traffic) from Entebbe airport. The five grouped arrivals went well but there was

a delayed flight due to missed connection at Nairobi. They boarded the next flight and by evening, the resort was buzzing with twenty four participants. Later that evening after dinner, Bunmi welcomed



Bishop William Muruiki with MCU church leaders welcoming us



everyone and introduced Tom as the chaplain. Everyone introduced themselves including the kids. We shared our expectations and prayed together. Everyone had a 'gift pack' for journaling.

### Journey to Jinja

Yes, we were in Africa, with the cock crowing away very early in the morning, waking us all. I was so proud to see everyone up and



MCU ladies welcoming mission partners with traditional dance



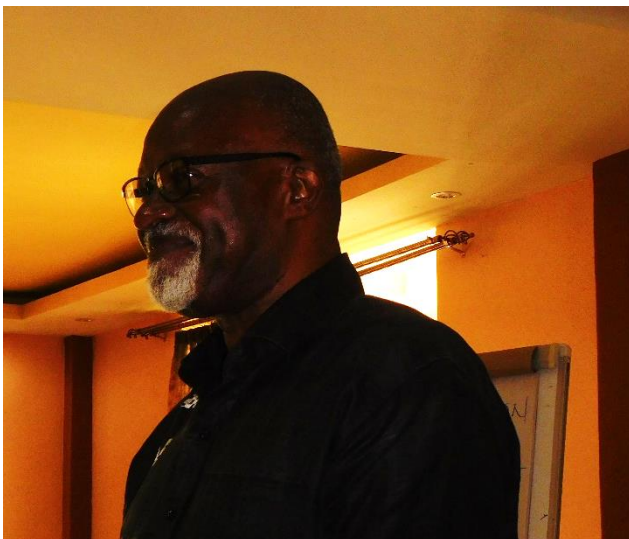
A visit to the source of the Nile at Jinja

ready by 6am. We had breakfast and the Nicon hotel staff were amazing, serving us promptly. We departed with our overnight luggage all in the hired bus by 7.10am and travelled using a newly constructed by-pass. Lots of chatting and fun on bus, along with the driver. We stopped at the Martyrs' museum for a short break, though it was officially closed for renovation. We arrived in Jinja by 1.00pm and were welcomed by Methodist Church leaders – Bishop Muruiki, Betty, David, Sarah plus the wonderful dancing lady group that blessed us with their traditional dance. Few mission partners were made to dance, resulting in lots of laughter. We later checked into our rooms, listened to a short welcome message from the Bishop, before proceeding to the Source of the Nile and Lake Victoria. We went on boat rides, saw beautiful elusive birds on different islands and visited the actual source of the Nile, where it separates from Lake Victoria. Afterwards we visited Ingrid's place on the banks of River Nile called 'Mto Moyoni' (Swahili for "river in the heart'). It was a lovely retreat destination. We returned tired, ate dinner and I went straight to bed.



### **Worship at different Methodist Church services**

This was Freddy and Dee's turn to shine as MCB newest mission partners serving with MC Uganda. Freddy allocated us to three different Methodist churches. We left at various times to the different destinations – Namulesa, Mpumude and Bugembe. At Namulesa church service that I attended, the message preached was on 'Thanksgiving'. The main passage shared was from 1 Chronicles 29:10–12. Members were excited to welcome us, however we could not wait for much after service because we needed to travel back to Mpumude to meet others and beat the terrible Sunday evening traffic. Thank God, we checked out of the hotel before going to church. When hastily joined our colleagues at Mpumude MC, visited Java Cafe for lunch on our way and headed back to Kampala, arriving at 5.30pm. By 6.30pm, we had supper. Tom and I liaised with necessary personnel to prepare for the next day.



Rev Dr Zac Niringiye – Former Bishop of Kampala

### **Message by Rev Dr Zac Niringiye – Freedom from the burden of mission service...**

Dr Zac is a sound theologian, the former Anglican Bishop of Kampala, a former Africa Secretary for Church Mission Society and currently focuses his energy on peace and social justice issues in Uganda. It was a pleasure to have him for the day and I conducted a 'question and answer session' for him with mission partners. He shared from Matthew 11: 28-30 encouraging us to respond and receive Jesus' ongoing invitation. How do we live out of the place of rest? We should stop hassling – easier said than done because he as an activist also struggles. However, Jesus' yoke is easy and his burden light. We need to come to the understanding that not all things depend on us, therefore to be stressed out is not God's will. Jesus offers an invitation to a life of rest.



MCB – CoS mission partners on retreat with Tom Kisitu as chaplain at one of the sessions

Life can be likened to a 'journey' or a 'story'. Jesus invites us where He is working. God invites us into His space. We need to ask, what is God doing here as we take our journeys seriously? Our journeys reflect God's calling and work for us. The question is, what is God doing; not what am I doing? As we travel through life's journeys, we

relocate and reposition ourselves; helping us see things from different perspectives. Consequently, these influence us. These become our stories, inspiring our 'call to mission'. Our stories shape us. Our stories matter. As we reflect on difficult times, God can change things around. However, we have to reflect on

what is He doing in us? Grace is what we encounter. May we respond to His invitation to work from the place of rest? Trusting that He is doing the work through us. Grace is profound, and it enables us respond to His great invitation and empowers us to fulfil our call in mission.

### Ingrid's story – A Dutch mission partner resident in Uganda

Ingrid shared her struggles and love for Uganda. Initially she arrived thirty years ago as a young adult and has been in and out of Uganda since. After her first two years, she was very successful in achieving her goals, however she encountered many challenges. Her repeated frustrations made her realise ultimately that the Africa culture was relational, not just result-oriented. In response to an invitation from friends in Kenya, she travelled to Nairobi for respite and got baptised in the Holy Spirit. For the first time, she felt empty and recognised that she had no love. She became angry with God and herself



Ingrid Wilts – Proprietor of 'Mto Moyoni'

because she felt her hard work all these years were not validated. She then travelled to Canada for a month and came back after which God transformed her from within to without, reassuring her that He had



Methodist Church Uganda youths with MCB mission partners praising God together



seen her works but was after her heart. She said God created us for relationships, not just for projects. Love goes to where words cannot reach. We can be driven by the need, but not led by the Spirit. The way to the Father's heart is open. We live in God's heart and He lives in our hearts. As we radiate God's love, we become more effective in mission. It was good to have Ingrid with us for the day.

Fred and Dee Takavarasha – MCB mission partners serving at Uganda



## Miscellaneous



At the Catholic Martyr's Centre, Kampala - Uganda

We had Methodist Church youths minister to us on one of the days and the United Methodist Church members, who were mostly Congolese living in Uganda, also came on another day. We had various sessions for mission partners to share among themselves to help replenish, rekindle and renew their vision for service throughout the retreat. I also had the privilege of

interviewing Tom, who initially trained as a Ugandan Methodist minister before studying at Edinburg University for postgraduate studies. Now he serves as a Church of Scotland minister at Edinburg with his wife and three children. He shared how he handles the 'dry times' with his family at Edinburg and later we had contributions and prayers.

The next day together we walked up Seguku Prayer Mountain, one of the renowned prayer mountains in Uganda. We took time to walk around, we had personal and group prayers. There were people camping, some in the auditorium for prayer meetings, some staying for longer periods stay in cottages. There was an administrative office on site and a tour guide took us round the premises. We also took time to visit the Catholic Martyrs' centre, a World heritage site in Kampala and the Uganda museum.

We had a 'Holy Communion service' to round up the retreat and some Nicon Hotel staff joined in. Throughout the retreat, each evening ended with a short exhortation with prayers, led by various mission partners. It was inspirational.



Congolese Methodists from UMC Uganda

Come Friday morning, 3 August 2018, participants started heading back home. The last group left at 00.10am the next day to Entebbe airport. I then travelled back to Jinja at 06.00am to beat the weekend

traffic as I had meetings with MCU church leaders at Jinja. It was a brilliant retreat and very grateful for everyone's participation especially the chaplain, in addition to funding from MC Britain and Church of Scotland.

Thank you.

Dr Bunmi Olayisade  
Africa Partnership Coordinator  
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