

Kenya Mission Trip Report – June 15- July 7, 2022

Psalm 105:1-2 “Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.”

It was an honor to join up with the team from Marietta, Travis & Donna Carter, Aaron & Sharon Rice and their son, Foster (age 17). The four adults were on the 2020 Kenya team with me. Having booked my flight late in the process, the price I could afford gave me some strange connections through 4 airports each way. Always an adventure. That also caused luggage to get waylaid. We arrived Kenya early on a Friday morning (mine was 6 a.m.). I did not receive my checked bags until the following Tuesday evening!! I’m thanking God that I followed promptings to put several outfits and personal care items in my carry on. I have been home for over a week now and with delayed flights and rerouting, one bag was 4 days coming and I still have not received the second checked bag! God knows!

First day we met Ken, our driver, and visited an after school program in Kowengwary slum. This was a follow up visit from 2020. Our team had left funds for building improvements and those had been accomplished. This pastor and his wife minister to the poor kids who don’t have school fees by giving them classes, food and other support for their families. There were about 60 kids in their program. The happy children demonstrated some of their learning with recitations and plays. Then lunch!!!

Saturday – Nine to ten hour drive across Kenya through the Rift Valley and many villages, past rice paddies, tea plantations, sugar cane fields to the shores of Lake Victoria and our hotel near the village of Obaga. Supper, devotions, short sleep.

Sunday – Early English speaking service at the Anglican Church in Obaga. Waiting for the dedication service for the new “Jewel’s Tailoring School” building. The leading pastor has other services. 1:30 or so they are ready. We arrive at the end of the road to the Jewel’s land to see a congregation of people waiting at the gate, lined up in reception....the church choir, the Bishop, the Jewels in their purple dresses and community members! A wall plaque at the gate has been covered with a drape. Much singing, prayer and pomp as we unveil the sign and open the gate to reveal the Tailoring School addition to the Jewel’s Hall!!

At the door of the Tailoring room there is more prayer, speeches, balloons, covered plaque on the wall, ribbon across the door! The plaque acknowledges the building as a gift from Jasper United Methodist Church. Scissors were stretched after cutting paper earlier so it took several cuts to get through the thin ribbon – but we made it!! As we entered the Bishop started breaking the balloons which others happily copied! A real celebration!!

What a lovely room with 8 pedal sewing machines in their places. Several ladies demonstrated the use of them. Lots of pictures, prayers, inspection and tour of facility, plus shopping Jewel's pottery and beads!! Praise the Lord for this opportunity for ladies to learn a trade!

Outside, tents had been set up for more acknowledgements, speeches, music and celebration! So many speakers and participants. My favorite was a spontaneous testimony from a college student, Maurice, who identified himself as a Kid of the Kingdom, a connection to JUMC beginnings in Obaga!! He was saying how grateful he was for his school sponsorship when he did not see any way on his own. Although not a JUMC sponsored student his testimony was moving and exemplary of all the sponsored kids.

A primary school representative thanked JUMC for all of the improvements to the primary school sponsored by them and especially the lunch program providing food 2 days a week for the students. This is extremely meaningful and has almost doubled enrollment since its outset. Among the improvements have been fencing the property for security, painting the building, repairing floors and walls and construction of a preschool classroom. The Linda Walsh Memorial Library (not JUMC sponsored) provides a classroom and resource materials and hopefully soon a computer lab.

The Jewels received their birthday blankets (my birthday project for my June birthday) and presented me (Dex) with a birthday gift (wall plaque) and cards expressing their appreciation. As always the ladies were gifted with a small bag of grocery staples for their homes.

After a long day of celebration the team packed up the medications to be used in tomorrow's clinic and took them to the hotel to be counted and packaged in dosages for easy distribution in the pharmacy the next two days.

Monday & Tuesday: Monday morning people are already waiting at the medical clinic! The team joined with the local medical professionals to get our assigned places. We have dentist, eye care, lab set up for covid, malaria, HIV testing, covid shots, counseling, pharmacy and more. I worked registration and triage. I could do temps and blood pressure while a local took personal information. Then the weighing station and on to the department needed. So many workers just helping where they saw the need – assisting elderly and handicapped, giving directions, giving breaks, running errands. It was good to see Joseph, Thomas's property manager, Samson the agronomist and Francis who initiated the pottery/bead program all working for the good of the Jewels and the community. This was the first clinic since our 2020 clinic so the needs were great! We saw over 1200 patients during the 2 days!

Part of our checked luggage were bags of supplies to be left in Obaga. From JUMC Dorcas Circle there was a bag of road race t-shirts that are so popular in the village, 50 kits of washable

menstrual pads and half a bag of medical supplies, mostly wound care products. The Jewels and community make use of everything that is brought to them.

Wednesday we crossed Lake Victoria on a ferry to visit the Dominion Model School that Thomas and Merab have directed for the last two years. It is a primary boarding school that was in trouble when the sponsors approached Thomas about taking over, having heard of his work with the Jewels and Obaga. Merab devotes much of her time to the school, a desire of her heart for a long time. The other team members have sponsored students at Dominion so their heart was to spend time there. For three days we sponsored some sewing and crocheting classes, a fun field day of games and sports, and a day trip for 4th and 5th graders to a National Park nearby.

On Friday the team split with the 5 going south to Maasi Mara for safari while I continued on with Thomas and Merab, headed back to Nairobi with stops back in Obaga and to visit Merab's parents and family. After a night in Obaga and a night in Kisumu where Thomas's brother and wife came to the hotel to supper with us, Merab went back to school and Thomas and I headed to Nairobi.

Monday the team was back in Nairobi after a really fun and successful safari! Tuesday was a day of shopping for those last souvenirs then repacking to balance their luggage before heading to the airport. I am honored to remain another week as a guest with Thomas and his kids. Bid the team good bye and settled in to rest up!

Children in Kenya are given much more responsibility at an earlier age than most children in the U.S. The two high school graduate girls in the house prepared meals, did laundry, kept the house and were kind to their guest! They also went to work with Dad for 2 days of packing SERV meals for distribution who knows where!!! Thomas oversees SERV Ministries operations in Kenya/Africa. The older two grown up kids worked their jobs and took care of themselves.

Then Thomas came home with plans for a surprise safari for the two girls (Mercy & Emily) and I to Amboseli National Park near Mt. Kilimanjaro! Bumpy, dusty roads into the lodge and park but so worth the trip. So many animals! Elephants are the stars of this park and we saw lots! At Lake Amboseli were lots of flamingos. The water was shallow so other animals crossed or fed in the water. Got some peeks of the mountain through the clouds! God's world is so amazing!!!

My personal thanks to everyone who supported me with thoughts, prayers, gifts and encouragement. It is my blessing to be the face of JUMC and represent my church for the work that they have done in the lives of widows and orphans in Obaga, Kenya! You see, the society called them widows and orphans but God has called them Jewels and Kids of the Kingdom. Lives are changed. Society is changing. The ladies were before shunned but now their

representation is requested at community events and meetings. God can make a way where there seems to be no way!! Thank you, Jasper United Methodist Church and supporters!!

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