

July 12, 1987

Dear brethren and sisters,

Loving greetings in the name of our Saviour.

Once again I welcome the opportunity to report to you with regard to our most recent visit to Kenya in April of this year.

First of all, we feel that it is important at the outset to make it clear, just for the record, that the funding for this trip came from personal resources and private donations. There was no financial assistance drawn out of the B.C.A.F.

On this trip I was accompanied by my daughter, sis Debbie Truelove, and bro Dan Sargent - both from the Richard ecclesia; also bro Mark and sis Clara Johnnatty from Leamington Spa, England. I must express my deep appreciation to all of them for the excellent companionship, co-operation, and assistance provided by them throughout. Travelling in Kenya for the work of the Truth is as tiring and gruelling an experience as it is rewarding; and the presence of others who willingly participate and share the workload is always most welcome and appreciated by all concerned.

The first few days of our stay in Kenya was spent in the city of Nairobi where we enjoyed the very relaxing atmosphere of the Fairview Hotel - during those brief periods of time that we were not otherwise occupied in arranging for transportation, visiting officials regarding ecclesial registration, as well as some shopping and sightseeing.

#### CONDITION OF COUNTRY

In the main, this part of Africa was in much better condition than when we last visited in 1984. There was no longer the evidence of extreme drought, although there was still much evidence of extreme poverty almost everywhere outside of the largest cities. We will not occupy much space in this report describing the details of the cost of living, living conditions, etc. This has been done in previous reports and most all of the information contained in those reports is still valid. For readers who would like to review such information we recommend that you refer especially to the March 4, 1985 report, and also to the report issued in the spring of 1983.

#### MEMBERSHIP STATUS

It is not easy to keep an accurate up-to-date record of the number of members there actually are in Kenya. Even bro Epaphras loses track from time to time. It was generally understood that after the situation with bro Moses we had about 85 members left in the Berean fellowship in Kenya. Before I left for Kenya I prepared a Kenya membership data base on the computer which generated a printout of all those who had been accepted to the Berean fellowship since our first visit in 1982. I took the printout with me and had bro Epaphras check it

over carefully.

The results surprised even him. There are at the present time about 110 Berean members in Kenya! About 85 of these are divided among ten ecclesias. The largest ecclesia is the Kimikungi ecclesia which has about 50 members; the remainder of the ecclesias are much smaller - from situations of isolation to about 12 members. The other 25 members are dispersed throughout Kenya in more remote regions. As we have previously stated in other reports, communication in Kenya is most difficult. It is not an easy task for a few brethren to maintain contact with every member. However, in most cases we have names and addresses (although addresses often change every few months) and an effort will be put forth to make contact with those 25 "lost sheep".

### VISITING THE ECCLESIAS

While in Kenya we attempted to visit as many of the ecclesias as possible in the time frame we had in which to work. Most of the ecclesias are in Western Kenya, therefore we used Webuye as our base, staying at the Park Villa Hotel. Webuye is not far from Bungoma, where visitors customarily stay. This time, however, accomodation was unavailable at Bungoma.

In order to provide everyone a glimpse of our activities I will use as a base the brief outline as provided to me by bro Mark.

1. KIMIKUNGI: Sunday 12th April - exhortation by bro Mark. This is the largest ecclesia and the meetings were held in the meeting room on the grounds of bro Philip Wekati, the recording brother. *He was quite ill most of the time we were there.*

2. KIMIKUNGI: Monday 13th April - Address by bro Ed

3. NASIANDA: Tuesday 14th April - Meeting held in the shade of a tree near the home of Bro Joseph Mapesa. Each visiting brother gave a short address on a First Principles topic suggested by the ecclesia. Access to the grounds of bro Mapesa was very difficult for our van, but our competent driver (James) did quite well to negotiate the many depressions along this narrow track.

4. CHENJENI: Wednesday 15th April - Another outdoor meeting in the shade on the grounds of bro Manuel Wanyama. Another three First Principles topics were given to us for our short addresses.

5. KIMILILI: Thursday 16th April - No meeting was held here as members lived in the town and a gathering was not considered to be in our best interest. (Actually we were under close surveillance by the authorities) However, we discussed informally as we admired the great variety of sis Damara's knitted pieces displayed.

6. CHEPTAIS: Friday 17th April - Meeting held at meeting room. The usual procedure of three topics on First Principles to be the subjects of our short addresses. This small meeting room was packed to capacity - about 30 adult visitors and 20 children. Two of Epaphras' colleagues, Moses and Gabriel,

showed much interest. So too did the landlord, whose name was also Moses. All of whom gave short words of welcome and appreciation (which was customarily done wherever we visited). This was a very long day and we returned to our hotel at 11:45 p.m.

7. MAKUMA: Saturday 18th April - no meeting held. Most of the time was occupied in listening to allegations and solving problems.

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8. LUTASO: Saturday 18th April - one address given by bro Mark on the subject of "Holiness". This was an ecclesia of doubtful standing since bro Vincent Wafula and bro Johnson Waneloba had sided with bro Moses Masika and had appeared to have gone over to Central. Also sis Elizabeth Obonyo and her daughters Florence and Sarah had been attending the Pentecostal services. However, bro Ed held discussions with the two bre mentioned above, and established the sincerity of their desire to return to the fold.

9. KIMIKUNGI: Sunday 19th April - Exhortation - bro Dan Sargent

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10. NALONDO: Sunday 19th April - After the breaking of bread at Kimikungi, sis Clara, sis Debbie, bro John Wafula & bro Mark left to visit bro and sis Cleophas Wanyama while bro Ed and bro Dan remained to conduct an interview for baptism. The candidate was Daniel, the son of bro Cleophas Chapesa of Nasianda ecclesia.

At the home of bro Cleophas Wanyama we met bro Moses Masika. This ecclesia had deflected to Central and so bro Mark set about asking the reason for their change of loyalty. Bro Moses stated his case through the interpretation of bro John Wafula and bro Mark replied through the same medium. The main problem seemed to be related to personality clashes and perceived inequities in distribution of financial help, aid programs, etc.

Bro Mark explained our intentions: (1) To investigate all charges and allegations; (2) To set up committees for dealing with fund administration; (3) To implement a system of accounting for the edification of all parties - local and overseas; (4) To establish the machinery for dealing with all problems.

Bro Mark did not get the impression from this ecclesia that the desire for the Truth was the most important consideration in their minds.

11. KITUII: Saturday, 25th April - Again we split forces. A small outdoor meeting was held, at which bro Mark spoke on the subject "The Promises and Holy Spirit Gifts". This subject was requested by Bro David Njoka. He is the only Berean member at Kituii, but there are a number of interested friends and family members who appear to be vacillating between the teaching of the Truth and that of the local African Holy Spirit Church,

hence the special request. The group at Kitui is poverty stricken in the extreme, therefore while bro Mark was teaching, bro Ed and bro Epaphras went to the town to purchase a supply of groceries for them. Bro David Njoka appeared to be in very poor health.

12. NAIROBI: Sunday, 26th April - we held our memorial meeting in the Council Hall at Dagoretti, a suburb of Nairobi. Bro Dan exhorted. Present were: Sis Mary Agnes Kariuki, sis Beatrice Wangila, bro John Wafula, bro Joshua Chesoli, bro Epaphras Wekati as well as some friends including Miss Priscilla Terry Katti and Mrs Teresia Wamjokota.

There were many friends around as well as children and they all showed a great interest in the Word of God.

Throughout our visits, sis Clara and sis Debbie were very busy writing and teaching new songs to the children, as well as giving them lessons on Bible stories. The children everywhere were very receptive and anxious to learn as were the adults. Many times would be the occasion when there would be almost as many adults as there were children crowding in close to listen to a S.S. lesson being taught.

#### SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS

The thirst for the word of God continues to be obvious to the point of being overwhelming to those traveling from our part of the world where one is so used to apathy and indifference and opposition to the gospel. Everywhere we went we were greeted enthusiastically and were; wherever possible, expected to talk and teach concerning the things of the gospel for several hours. In spite of stifling temperatures, cramped quarters, and uncomfortable seating, there was no apparent lapse in attention span during that time. This was so for members AND non-members alike.

Sometimes when we were traveling, we would stop the van on the side of a street in a small village. In only a matter of a few minutes the van would be approached by a few curiosity seekers intent on finding out what we were doing, and perhaps get looking for an opportunity to make a few shillings by posing for a picture. As soon as word got around that we were not really tourists, but teachers of the gospel, the van would very quickly become surrounded by sometimes upwards of a hundred or more who would have become eager listeners to the Word had we been prepared for it with time and, particularly in view of prevalent political circumstances, the permission to do so without causing trouble. Loudspeakers would certainly help also, if not a necessity. It is something to think about and make preparation for for future visits. One could not help but contemplate the reaction if the same effort were put into preparation, advertising, and presentation of lectures over there that is done in our own countries. I am confident the result would be in the hundreds if not thousands of eager listeners!

Bibles, or the lack of them, continues to be a problem. They are in heavy demand. It is not that they are unavailable, but they do cost money, more than the average are able to afford.

The reason is that Bibles do not last long. They are used extensively; and they either wear out quickly, or simply disappear if not closely watched and guarded, like one would a wallet or purse! A Bible is a highly coveted item almost anywhere in Kenya. Consequently, our members quite often find themselves missing a Bible, and are not always able to replace it quickly or easily.

Other books and bible literature are also urgently required. We came away with the feeling that there was a need to supply the brethren and sisters with books that are basic and easy to be understood. There is always the problem of the language barrier; and we know the kind of struggle that some of our own members with a relatively good command of the English language have with some of the pioneer writings. It is really asking a lot of them to expect them to be able to read and assimilate these same writings which cause some of us difficulty. They will ask for these books, read them, and ask for more; but we have found on occasion that some confusion has been the result.

Of great benefit would be a newsletter of sorts - weekly, monthly, quarterly, - intended and designed exclusively for Kenyan brethren and sisters. It should be explicit, simple, easy to be understood, and relatively brief. I understand that bro Mark has committed himself to a publication of this nature for their benefit. That is good. More would be better. It is a challenge for those with the time, knowledge, and capability. It is an effort that would need to be co-ordinated to avoid duplication or overlap of subjects. If anyone else is interested in helping out with increasing this effort, please let me know.

It has become obvious to us that Ecclesial Gatherings will need to have high priority, as well as any other activities that are capable of fostering fellowship and spiritual encouragement and growth. It has become obvious to us that the balance has become weighted a bit too heavily on the side of material assistance and projects, with the accompanying preoccupation in the minds of a few and the shifting of priorities from the spiritual eternal to the material present. All of the problems of the past couple of years can be traced to this, particularly so in the situation of Bro Moses Masika. It APPEARS in his case the Truth is viewed simply as a means to obtain material goods and welfare. We emphasize APPEARS because, of course, only Yahweh knows the heart.

#### MATERIAL CONDITIONS

In spite of this, we cannot close our eyes to obvious need. In material things everyone is still very poor. I believe that it was in one of our past reports that we made the observation that no money in the amounts that we would be familiar with could ever come close to relieving them from the vicious circle of abject poverty which surrounds the large majority of the rural population of Kenya. But there are still things that we can and should do to help, and some of the programs that have been suggested and undertaken in the past are right on target, especially that of education. We have added that of sanitation to our list, as sanitation, or the lack of it, appears to be a large contributor to the rampant problems of disease.

We must, therefore, rather improve the system we already have in place, make it more effective and efficient so that less time need be spent with the task of distribution, and with the task of dealing with perceived problems that arise in members's minds due to lack of communication and disorganization in some areas. It is our desire to work toward making this part of the work efficient, effective, and very much in the background, while fostering and encouraging a good healthy positive attitude in the realm of spiritual activities and growth. Bro Epaphras made the comment at one point that he had observed that whenever members were occupied with ecclesial activities, problems with material and welfare assistance slid very much into the background.

Consequently, while in Kenya this time, we spent some time and effort at organizing a system of committees that should effectively reduce if not eliminate the kind of problems and complaints that have been plaguing us in the past few years, and create the environment for even greater spiritual development among members and ecclesias. This involves, among other things, an inter-ecclesial gathering for the members every four months - December, April, and August, providing opportunity for communication, exhortation, gospel proclamation, and committee meetings. Bro Mark was very helpful in this matter, compiling a brief but effective sub-constitution to serve as a guide to the organization and function of the committees in Kenya and Overseas.

#### THE POLITICAL SITUATION

All this, however, revolves around the assumption that the Berean members in Kenya will be able to obtain registration status with the present administration. At the present time, things are in a state of "limbo"; without a registration number any meeting involving more than one family is an illegal assembly. Also, any organized administration of welfare funds for any purpose within an unregistered society is illegal. These are laws that have been in existence for many years, but the difference now is that they are being enforced much more rigorously than in the past. The government of Kenya is becoming very defensive and somewhat oppressive as its popularity with the people dwindles. Though in name it is a democratic government, there is no official opposition; and in fact it is more of a right-wing dictatorship.

#### THE MWAKENYA

The primary opposition to the government comes from an underground movement called the Mwakenya. It has gained considerable popularity and sympathy among the people, and stops at nothing - including acts of violence - to cause trouble and embarrassment for the administration. In retaliation, President Moi embarked on a campaign to wipe out the Mwakenya, making it a criminal offence to be seen talking to anyone with Mwakenya connections, or to be in possession of any of its subversive publications.

#### KANU CARDS

Government membership (KANU) cards have been issued, and, although it is not compulsory to carry one, not having one carries the risk of being under immediate suspicion of the authorities, and makes it very difficult if not impossible to obtain or hold a job, and even do trivial things like ride a bus! After examining the matter of the cards while in Kenya, and speaking to some of the senior brethren before we left, it appeared that the cards carried no political obligation or affiliation and were not unlike the cards that were mandatory for many in our own country to carry during WW II in order to purchase fuel and supplies. Our judgement on the matter was that it be left to the individual conscience to decide for themselves.

#### OUTSPOKEN POLITICAL INTERFERENCE BY CHURCH LEADERS

What makes it especially difficult for the brethren and sisters at this time is the fact that some of the churches and church leaders have become very vocal, siding with the Mwakenya against the government. Consequently there are no church denominations of any kind that are winning popularity contests in Kenya at this time!

#### THE QUEST FOR REGISTRATION

While in Nairobi, we visited the Canadian High Commission. They were very helpful and supplied us with much information regarding the present state of affairs in Kenya. They warned us to be prepared to spend a night or two in jail if we insisted on holding meetings with our brethren and sisters there without a registration number. We were also strongly advised by the Commission to register with them in order that, in the event of trouble, they would have a record of our itinerary and be able to locate us. They informed us that the only way that the Berean members will be able to carry out without persecution the duties that the Truth requires will be through the means of registration. The process is a complicated procedure, and we were advised that success would be next to impossible without the services of a lawyer.

In order for the members to register, they must send in an application to the government to register their group as a non profit religious society or organization. Accompanying the application must be a copy of a constitution showing how the group is organized, what its purpose and functions are, as well as an outline of the convictions of its members. An auditor must be appointed to once a year audit all financial activities. Recorded on the application must be the names of the president or chairman (recording brother), secretary, and treasurer. The government then proceeds to monitor all activities of these individuals so as to be certain that they have no subversive tendencies or connections. During this period of time the group is forbidden to hold any meetings whatsoever. The possibility of the government approving the application is only about 50/50.

From recent correspondence that we have received, we are given to understand that the application has been sent in to the authorities. Now we wait and pray for the well-being and safe-

keeping of our brethren and sisters in Kenya. Bro Epaphras writes, "We have devised a way of preaching to the members and their friends without attracting the attention of our foes. We hope it works until we know of the outcome of the registration."

#### "THY WILL BE DONE"

If this effort should fail, there are one or two alternatives that can be tried; if these also fail, we have done all that we can - the outcome of the situation is in the hands of our Creator whose will WILL be done regardless of our feeble efforts.

In the meantime, the fund is still in existence and should be diligently maintained to the best of our capabilities. We have commitments to maintain that we have undertaken, and the fund is slowly and steadily being depleted. It is not a problem to have more in the fund than we need at the present time; if things should suddenly take a turn for the worse in Kenya or Chile or anywhere else for that matter, we can be sure that there will be a heavy demand on the fund. It is in the path of wisdom to be prepared for such things.

On the other hand, if things go well and the registration does go through, there are many positive things to be gained. Many restrictions on imported goods may be relaxed. Import duty may be waived. The brethren and sisters can go about their activities with confidence and freedom tempered with wisdom and discretion, preaching the Truth in towns and cities, in public buildings, on street corners and open air parks. They will be able to have Gatherings and Bible Study sessions without fear of molestation. It will be a time of great joy if this becomes possible. And for us now it is a tremendously forceful exhortation not to take the freedom and relative peace that we experience in our own countries for granted. It may not always be so.

#### PRAY EARNESTLY

We will do our utmost to keep everyone informed of developments as we hear of them. In the meantime, brethren and sisters, your support is urgently required - PARTICULARLY IN EARNEST PRAYER FOR OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF KENYA AND CHILE.

Yours in grace,

Bro Ed Truelove