

Report from Kenya Travels- June 26-July 12 , 2023.

On June 26th to July 1st, I journeyed back to Kenya to attend the Triennials of USFWI and of FUM. I expect to go back for my regular travel in ministry (God willing) in October or November.

I flew into Nairobi, was met by Judith Nandikove and slept at her house for 10 hours. Then back to the airport to welcome Dorothy Curtis from Maine to Kenya. We went the next day to Nakuru via the Easy coach bus, enjoying the zebra, gazelles, and baboons on the way. We were welcomed by Pamela Ngoya, pastor of Pangani Friends Church and stayed at her home.

The next day, we did errands, shopping and prepared for the visitors who came for the mini women's day of prayer before the Triennial. Several of the women ministers who travel with me in Tanzania and Uganda also came and we had a wonderful fellowship that evening on the importance of women in ministry.



Dorothy and Judith. Pamela, MKB, Rosemary, Agneta, and Dorothy. Dorcas, Rosemary, & Margaret

On Saturday July 1st we welcomed the visitors. First a team from USFWK officers came to see what we were doing. They were glad to see that we were just holding the usual prayer service and were not part of some splinter group that was using oil, salt, and other materials that were copied from other churches. They joined us in the prayers for the conference, for each nation represented, for the sick, with each of the ministers leading us over each issue of concern.

The Pangani church had about 65 children, including many Aids orphans who stay at the church much of the time, as they feel loved there. They all stay with elderly grandparents, or aunts/uncles each evening. Joyce Shilavula the Sunday school teacher had them singing, dancing, and making everyone joyfully welcomed. Then the Pangani women danced in procession to wrap each visitor with a beautiful piece of Kenyan cloth in their colors (Black, green, red, and white striped).



Procession of women to wrap visitors. Pamela, our hostess. Prayer leaders-both USFWK&QWTEAM

Then the vanload of American Friends arrived late from Nairobi after many traffic jams. The children lined up in two rows and were singing "welcome, welcome, welcome" as they entered the building. Suddenly all the exhaustion from the long travels from USA and hunger was forgotten as they were fed from the joy of the children! We then continued the prayers, and again at the end, each of them were also wrapped in the Kenyan cloth.



USA visitors arrive.



Rita, USFWI children secretary dances @kids.



QW team leaves Pangani

After eating together, all visitors were divided up and taken by women from neighboring Friends meetings, who took them to their homes, fed them typical home cooked Kenyan food, and visited their local meetings on Sunday morning before escorting them to the Conference at Kabarak University just outside Nakuru city. This was the only chance that the Americans were able to visit a local home, meeting, and Friends School to understand what life is like in Kenya.

On the 2nd, I was asked to preach at Pangani. Then went to Kabarak. On the first night of the Triennial the male leadership spent a lot of time introducing various leaders (the male leaders). The best part of the first evening, was the Pangani children who came to sing, dance, and to carry in flags of each of the countries represented, followed by their adult choir that sang in beautiful four or five part harmony. We didn't get to sleep until after 11pm that night! (The big men get front seats)



Arrival at Kabarak



Pangani kids dance and bring in the flags of nations represented.

On the 3rd, the Kenyan women got up early for prayers while many of the rest of us found we needed to sleep a little more. I missed the first talk, but joined a small group afterwards. We then began the first two days which were for FUM business. Much of the time was spent on reports about the work FUM does in various parts of the world. The group that drew the most attention from Kenyans were those from Belize. The Belizeans have had a continuation school for kids in Belize city to get tutored so they can pass the national exams. They are working a lot on issues of drugs and gangs, and have started a Friends meeting where most are teenagers. One is even studying via Zoom at FTC in Kenya to become a pastor! The idea of a meeting led by youth was a challenge to us all. The other report was from the head of the Ramallah Friends School who shared about the school for Christians, Muslims, and Jews in occupied Palestine. They teach the basic Friends principals of integrity, peace, equality, and many of their graduates become leaders in various international organizations. Kirenia, from our sister meeting in Cuba also shared. Of note to New England Friends, Niva Muchuma from the new programmed meeting in NH shared about the diaspora Friends churches now in North America.



Small discussion group



Kirenia and Karla sharing about Cuba. Muchuma from NH



On Wednesday morning, we all had workshops on various topics. I led one with Judith Nandikove and Agneta Injairu on Faith and Play/Godly Play methods for Sunday schools. We also shared how the African branch of QREC (Quaker Religious Education Collaborative) has started doing oral interviews of Kenyan elders to see what stories should be told to the next generation about Africans (rather than the British or American Quakers of the past). These workshops were held in the School of Law, which was hard to find, and we started the workshop with two people but by the end of the hour had 45. Thank God, we had Joyce and Luisa from Nairobi who demonstrated a Biblical story at the beginning, and I demonstrated a story about Priscilla Makhino at the end, so all got a glimpse of how different these methods are from those used typically in Kenya.

That afternoon, the Kenyans were busy selling various things they had made to raise money for their home meetings and families. One of the most popular were the beadwork done by the women from Samburu that Pamela Ngoya, Rosina Leprario, and I had helped with sewing machines, and materials. The Samburu gave me their leftovers to sell some in the USA for their support. I will take some to New England YM sessions to sell there.



Luisa tells story and Joyce asks wonder questions at workshop. Some of the colorful Samburu beadwork

In the evening, we held a banquet with much music and special Kenyan foods. (This was the one thing the local host committee let the women be in charge of). Everyone was to dress in African style, so many bought such at the afternoon market. The event took a long time, and the evening speakers, Nicholas and Dorcas Otieno from Tanzania, spoke very well, for two hours, making the meeting not end until 10:30pm. Many of the Kenyans did not stay until the end of the event.

On Thursday, the USFWI Triennial began, while the Quakermen met in a different place. I was in charge of introducing Jane Mutoro, a younger pastor from Dunholm, one of the largest Friends churches in Nairobi as Bible Study speaker. She had prepared a powerpoint to go with the sharing, but we were not able to get it working. The second day, the Kenyan women decided to just have their typical worship service, (with a sermon, and lots of singing and prayer), rather than the Bible presentation with small group discussions afterwards-

Then I was asked to take the minutes for a couple business items, since the recording clerk was not able to attend. I was surprised when they decided to double the dues of membership for North Americans. I hope it doesn't discourage members. We also officially welcomed the women from four new splinter yearly meetings. Here in USA, when a YM splits, usually the women of the region remain together, despite the divisions often led by the men. Do we treat Kenyans differently than fellow Americans?



Edith Wekesa @cake, Cynthia Steele, USFWI PC Jane preaching

The crowd of women in white

The last day, all the new officers of each of the organizations were introduced. I rejoiced when the new presiding clerk of FUM was a woman (Sarah Lookabill) and that one of the Kenyan women (Zelika Galavu) was also appointed to the Board as a trustee. I also rejoiced that the Quakermen had chosen the majority of their officers from Kenya, (7 out of ten) with the other three from USA. The USFWI had chosen one token Jamaican, one token Kenyan, and all ten others were white women from USA. When the majority of members of Friends in the world are women from East Africa, I was embarrassed by our women's selection.



Sara Lookabill.

Zelika Galavu.

Crowd of women singing spontaneously throughout the Triennial

The Triennials ended with a moving ceremony where an usher brought a flag of a country forward. Representatives of that country were invited to stand, share the prayer concerns for that country, and were then prayed for. We then were all sent forth to spread the Good News.

I left immediately afterwards, and went with Judith's driver back to Nairobi, after stopping for a delicious lunch of yogurt with real fruit in it. The vehicle was packed to the roof with large number of large suitcases that included cloth and donated reuseable sanitary pads from the US women, plus bags that several Americans did not want to carry around with them while they went on a week's safari in between the Triennial and their journey home.

On Sunday, I visited Kariokor Friends Meeting in Nairobi with Edna Bandi (a Kenyan named after one of the earliest missionaries-Enda Bond). Their service began at 10 and went on until 4PM. In addition to the worship, they had a member of parliament with his entourage come visit, and they were announcing and introducing all the newly elected officers for the monthly meeting. The old ones were thanked and the new ones were prayed for. I was impressed that the older male presiding clerk, lined up the new officers and in the presence of everyone handed over each item to the new leaders (a copy of their bylaws, keys to office

and PO box, laptop computer, flash drive of all minutes and important documents, and a detailed financial report). How nice to see amiable and proper handing over to the incoming officers. The actual worship service was led by women and the one who gave the sermon was a younger woman. Then the women and others danced down the aisles to thank the young woman and to give her gifts of appreciation. I enjoyed dancing with the women. Edna is interested in helping with the oral interviews for the Africa Archives.



Humble woman leader cheered



Large Sunday school



Simon Khaemba

On Monday, I meet with Pastor Simon Khaemba, who asked to learn more about the new Africa Quaker Archives that I have been helping with. It was a joy to find a well respected man who wants to join the Archives committee due to genuine interest in collecting the archives, and concern that history of Kenyan Friends not be lost.

Very early (5am) I awoke to go to the airport. I was delighted after the 8 hour flight to London that my flight on to USA was delayed an hour. I actually had time to walk and even get a cup of tea between the flights, instead of having to run at full speed across the terminals of that large airport. I slept the rest of the night at my niece's home, and then drove home on the 12th. I had to detour several times due to the roads washed out or flooded from the torrential rains. I was very grateful for the safe journey home. Thanks to all who were praying for my journey. I thank God for all the things we can learn from each other.

Marian
7/20/2023