

MISSION TRIP TO BIBLE TRUTH REVIVAL CHURCH

NAIROBI KENYA AUGUST 12 THROUGH AUGUST 22

Our Journey Begins

Monday and Tuesday were very long travel days as we all left the east coast of the US on Monday evening around 8:00 PM EST and arrived at our hotel in Nairobi Kenya at approximately 11:30 PM Tuesday night Kenya time. Everyone was exhausted so we agreed to meet at the hotel dining area at 8 AM on Wednesday.

Wednesday was basically a travel recovery day, but rather than hanging out at the hotel and resting, we decided to pack in some adventure and sight seeing. Pastor Allen, a seasoned visitor to Nairobi, had a number of excellent suggestions to keep us busy and show us the hidden beauty and gems of Nairobi as well as some significant historical sites.

After breakfast, we hired a car for the day and our driver, Lucas, did an excellent job of navigating the traffic in Nairobi. The drive was filled with things you just don't see back home. The two way main highway, (like our 4-lane feeways), was decorated with countless street vendors selling everything from fruit to clothes, furniture, hotels, even giant used tractor tires, everything you can imagine was for sale along this major highway. Some of the mini buses we saw along the way were ornately decorated with lights and murals. Many sported messages of God with scripture and biblical references. They don't have laws against religious messages in public. There is no public transportation so all travel is by private car, Uber, or these buses. To attract customers, drivers decorate their ride with outrageous decor including LED light shows and loud music, anything to snag a paying passenger. In the city, families hang their clothes out to dry making for a colorful tapestry along the highways.



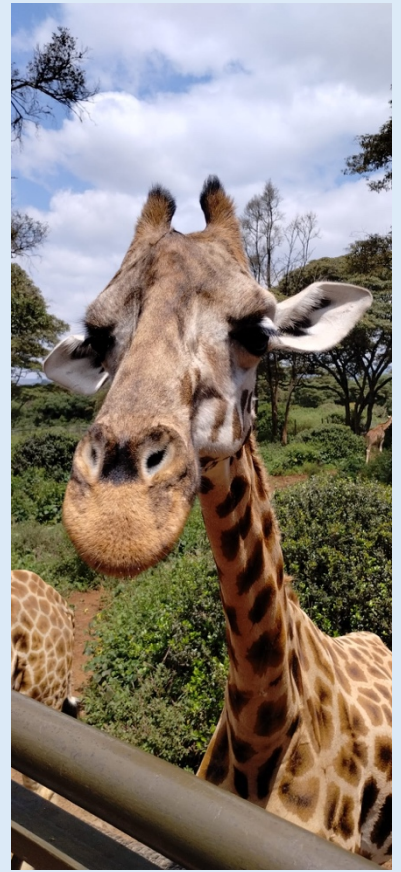
SIGHTS ALONG THE ROAD



GIRAFFE CENTRE

Our first stop was the Giraffe Centre where you can get up close and personal with the giraffes while feeding them food pellets. They have long sticky tongues and they have the ability of curling their tongue into a full coconut cup full of pellets in the blink of an eye. In theory, you are supposed to feed them one pellet at a time on their tongue, but some of us were not so lucky. While carefully feeding one giraffe, another giraffe would skillfully scoop up the rest of the pellets thereby robbing us of our entire supply of pellets. Oh, there were also signs warning visitors to be cautious while interacting with the giraffes as they can sometimes headbutt or may accidentally knock people over (especially children). Read that as “If you don’t give me all your pellets, you might just leave with a giraffe headache!” 😊.





Matbronze Museum

Next we went to the Matbronze Museum where we saw hundreds of bronze sculptures of the wildlife in Kenya and the nearby areas. All of the sculptures were intricately crafted and lifelike. For a cool \$200,000+ US, you could be the proud owner of a one ton bronze lion. They even had a giant elephant head sculpture with color changing eyes to greet you on your way in.



MUSEUM TREASURES

KAREN BLIXEN HOUSE

Then we took a tour of the Karen Blixen house. Karen was a famous Danish author and the first women entrepreneur business women in then East British Africa. She owned and ran a 6,000 acre coffee farm and was responsible for introducing coffee as a cash crop in Africa. She is best known for her book "Out of Africa" which was later turned into a movie by the same name starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep. On the property, we saw many beautiful native flowers and trees that have been preserved throughout the years.



KAREN BLIXEN HOUSE

Utamaduni Restaurant and Gift Shop

By late afternoon we were all pretty tired and hungry so Pastor Allen brought us to one of his favorite hidden gems, the Utamaduni. The weather was spectacular, 73 degrees, and dry with a refreshing breeze. The food was as good as the weather and it was nice to sit and relax for a time and enjoy some food and conversation. We talked about the plan for the coming days when we connect with Bishop Stephen. We planned daily devotions and end of the day discussions of Highs and Lows.

Visit to BTRC Church in Gilgil

There is no such thing as a boring ride along the highways in Kenya. Your trip is guaranteed to be exhilarating and not for the faint of heart. Here are some highlights of travel on the highways and byways.

1. For some reason, speed bumps are scattered across the high speed travel lanes causing rapid deceleration and body jolts. We think they are put there by auto repair shops who specialize in brakes and suspension repairs.
2. If you like animals, you will find every type roaming the highway medians and shoulders, cows, sheep, goats, baboons, monkeys, zebras, and giraffes (which were in a Conservation Area, but perfectly visible from the road). You will see them all grazing or trying to steal food from tourists when you are stopped by one of those nasty speed bumps. John told us the baboons were known to reach into your car to steal food so we were told to keep the windows shut.
3. The highways and city streets are a virtual mall and grocery store. You can pull over and buy couches, doors, appliances, snacks, soccer balls, pretty much anything you desire. The trick is finding a place to pull over and learning how to barter.
4. Motorcycle drivers tie huge loads onto the back of their bikes to transport things we would never attempt to transport on a motorcycle in America.
5. If you are not as skilled a driver as Mario Andretti, you're best to consider taking an Uber or walking. Like most Ex-British colonies, drivers in Kenya drive on the left (wrong) side of the road. In addition, motor bikes perform amazing feats of gymnastics, lane splitting, riding on shoulders, jumping curbs, and weaving inches from cars and trucks. They even go in the opposite direction sometimes! Cars and trucks play range chicken and passing vehicles on the left or right at high speed seems to be a national sport. We had a number of what appeared to be near hits on our way to Gilgil. Those of us in the back of the car could tell when one occurred because we could hear Patricia laughing nervously. But we did have faith in our angels and our driver John (Bishop Stephen's son).
6. Besides seemingly no traffic rules, there are no emission standards either. Many cars and trucks can be seen spewing large clouds of black smoke rich with petro and carbon monoxide. At altitudes of 8,700 feet (peak altitude on our way to Gilgil), breathing can be challenging. We often found ourselves tired along our three hour one-way excursion.



SIGHTS ALONG THE WAY TO GILGIL



MORE SIGHTS ALONG THE ROAD

After 3+ hours we finally arrived at the Bible Truth Revival Church. As we approached, we could hear and feel the thunderous sounds of joyful music and voices singing and harmonizing. The church itself was simple and stark. Structurally it was made from local beams cut from nearby forests and corrugated sheet steel panels for the roof and sides. The floor was a simple poured concrete and the seating was comfortable colorful plastic chairs.

But as we all know, the church is not the building or accommodations, it's the people, the congregation and the blessings of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was definitely present in this place. As guests, we were seated up front, about 15 feet from some mega sized speakers with large placards reading 2,000 watts. We can tell you that every watt was used! The roof and sides of the church would vibrate in harmony with the music.

The service on a Thursday was a special event scheduled by Bishop Stephen to enable Pastor Allen to preach to the community at his newest church (one year old). For the rest of us it was a special treat and it allowed us to observe and participate with the community on their home turf and to experience life out in the country.

Pastor Allen's sermon focused on God planting two things in your heart... eternity and the incorruptible seed. Because this was a special event, the church was packed with about 70 adults Inside (standing room only) and 30+ children outside of the walls of the church.

During the praise and worship session we were treated to some amazing voices, loud music, and superb dancing. We were greeted with a special dance just for us by five young boys who could really move! Truly the Spirit of the Lord was in this place. The people wore some of the most vibrant contrasting colors we've ever seen, very African style.



PRAISE AND WORSHIP IN GILGIL

When the service was over, the group of us went out to meet with the children. They were so happy and wide eyed as for many of them this was the first time they had ever seen people with our complexion and many of them wanted to have their picture taken with us. Others wanted hugs and little kisses. We were able to bless them with a soccer ball that was bought on the highway, Bible verse bookmarks, special spectrum (rainbow) glasses and different colored light sticks. Our gifts were enthusiastically received by all and the glasses were a big hit. Our time with the children and the congregation was somewhat abbreviated as we had a long trek back to Nairobi.

However, we will never forget the kindness and love imparted on us by these very lovely people as they left an indelible imprint on our hearts.



THE CHILDREN OF GILGIL

Bible Truth Revival Church (BTRC)

Pastor Allen has been shepherding the Bible Truth Revival Church with Bishop Stephen Mwangi for over twenty-five years and the growth of this church has been nothing short of a miracle. It has evolved from a very humble beginning in a small tin building with a dirt floor in the middle of a corn field to a bustling church and a school with electricity and plumbing capable of holding multiple hundreds of parishioners, students, and guests. The church itself remains on the same plot of land, but the city and community has grown up around it. In fact, Pastor Allen years ago prophetically envisioned elevated highways and a bustling community surrounding the church, and that's exactly what has come to fruition. The photos below clearly illustrate how the city

has sprouted up around the BTRC and the photos were taken from the elevated highway as prophesied by Pastor Allen.



THE NEW BIBLE TRUTH REVIVAL CHURCH

None of this would have occurred without the generous financial support and prayers provided by GMI over the years.

In the eyes of the ministry in Nairobi, Africa, Pastor Allen is quite a celebrity. As co-founder of the Bible Truth Revival Church, the people there love and revere him. When he is in town, parishioners from member churches come from hundreds of miles away just to hear Pastor Allen preach the word of God. Attending a church event is a journey into African pomp and circumstance. The incredibly loud music, spirited dancing, and vibrantly colored garments make these events unforgettable. Music and dance are in the DNA of the African people. Praise and worship is a spiritual and physical event. Technology is employed to augment the experience. Brightly colored LED lights flash in synchrony with the music. Worship team members sing and dance with their entire being! They even use theatrical smoke to enhance the experience. We could use to experience more of this level of enthusiasm and sheer joy back in the states.

As a team, we attended three events at the BTRC mother church. On Saturday, we witnessed the ordination of Pastor George Njenga to Bishop along with the promotion of church members to elders and pastors. It was a beautiful and lively ceremony attended by friends, family, and members of other associated churches in the near area as well as from hundreds of miles away. Those ordained to pastor were dawned in blue robes and were anointed with holy oil poured from a bull's horn. Pastor Allen

participated in the event by praying over the candidates and giving them some prophetic words.



ORDINATION DAY CELEBRATION

On Sunday, before church services, Christine and Dennis had the opportunity to entertain the children of the parish with Karate demonstrations and Angel performed a puppet show with his sidekick “Little Johnny.” Christine and Dennis are both high ranking black belts in their Karate style (Uechi Ryu). Christine is a “Godan” or 5th degree black belt while Dennis is a “Nanidan” or 7th degree black belt. In their style, there are ten degrees of black belt ranks (“dan” means black belt rank”).

Below are some pictures that capture the activities. The children all participated in some basic karate moves including learning to punch, kick, block, and some basic self defense moves. Fun was had by all and giggles and cheers could be heard emanating from the large group of children (about 50).

Following the karate demos and exercises, Angel brought out his puppet “Little Johnny” who told the Biblical story of “David and Goliath.” The children really enjoyed the story and they particularly liked the part where “Little Johnny” emulated Goliath’s demise.

After the demos we blessed the children with colorful spectrum glasses and multi-colored light sticks that could be made into glowing bracelets. The spectrum glasses turn white light into a series of visible rainbows and colored lights / LEDs into light spectrums representative of the colors. In addition, Christine gave out Bible Verse

bookmarks to encourage hiding the Word in your heart. The presents were a big hit and the sheer joy they brought was priceless.



KARATE DEMONSTRATIONS AND PUPPET SHOWS FOR THE CHILDREN OF BTRC

We then joined the regularly scheduled Sunday services. Like the services on Saturday, the church was filled with singing and choreographed dancing. The worship team donned spectacular color coordinated outfits. Pastor Allen took the podium to bring the word of God. Before he started his sermon, he introduced the team he brought with him from the US. Chris and Dennis were still in their Gi's as they did not have time to change into their church clothes. This gave an opening to Bishop Stephen and Pastor Allen to ask for a quick impromptu karate demo in front of the entire congregation. They chose to demonstrate "Dan Kumite" meaning Black Belt rank "clashing of arms" or essentially a choreographed set of punches, kicks, and blocks. The congregation seemed to enjoy the demo and at the end, Bishop Stephen reminded the congregation, "Don't anyone try this at home!" 😊 .

Pastor Allen's sermon focused on God planting seeds in your heart and that life is full of highs and lows. When you are low or in a dark place, it may feel that God has abandoned you...but that's when God is planting your next destiny and hence preparing you for your future. He talked about God planting a seed in Bishop Stephen so many years ago to raise up a great ministry and that he rooted his church as a tiny building (see pictures below) in the middle of a corn field in Nairobi, Kenya. Over the years, it has flourished and grown and the city has sprung up around it. The pastors and Bishop ordained the previous day all had a seed planted in them by God, "and

wherever God plants them, there will be a profound harvest around them as He is on their side.”



SUNDAY SERVICE AT BTRC



THE ORIGINAL BIBLE TRUTH REVIVAL CHURCH



INSIDE THE OLD CHURCH

Today, BTRC continues to expand its school with the addition of a second level that is well on its way to completion.



SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION IN PROGRESS

Girls of the Community

On Monday, we were blessed to participate in an event at the church for some local community girls. Some call them "slum girls" since they live in some of the shanties that surround the church. The event was put together by Bishop Stephen's daughter Jane and two of her friends. The objective of the event was to demonstrate that BTRC has a heart for the community and they are there to offer the girls a safe place to gather as well as supporting them with some basic necessities. When we arrived the church was filled with about 100 girls ranging in age from 6 years old to mid 20s. Like most events at the church, there was loud music, dancing, and singing. There was sort of a boy band, (think Back Street boys), singing and showing the girls some nice dance

steps. This activity really got the girls interested in participating and sort of unified the small crowd.



COMMUNITY GIRL CELEBRATION

After the dancing, Jane and her friends each took time to speak to the girls encouraging them to stay strong and consider bringing Jesus into their lives. Each gave a testimony on how they were saved and how they have given their lives to Jesus. Caroline (one of the speakers) told the girls that she grew up as an orphan and how she could relate to their situation. It was a poignant moment and we could tell how much it touched many of the girls.

After the testimonies, Pastor Allen offered an alter call and about 30 of the girls responded and were blessed with the Holy Spirit and saved that day. There were hugs all around and it was a truly spiritual event.



PASTOR ALLEN'S ALTER CALL

After the alter call, we were able to bless the girls with a number of practical gifts which were purchased with donations from our wonderful Grace Ministries International (GMI) community. These included wash cloths, feminine products, underwear, and toilet paper, basic items we tend to take for granted.



GIFTS FOR THE GIRLS

Our Trip to Kibichoi

Our next adventure brought us to one of the BTRC's oldest churches in Kibichoi. This church has been in existence for over 20 years and has a well established following. It was about an hour and a half drive from Nairobi and the ride was filled with beautiful countryside and large coffee plantations and sugarcane fields. The service at this church was, once again, a special event organized by Bishop Stephen. He wanted Pastor Allen to preach to the members of this church and the surrounding affiliated churches. Even though it was a Tuesday, the church was packed with local parishioners and guest Pastors from nearby. The church itself was well constructed with concrete walls, tile floors, steel trusses and a steel roof and comfortable seating in colorful plastic chairs. As can be seen in the pictures below, it's a beautiful piece of architecture.



THE CHURCH AT KIBICHOI

The church had electricity which was evident by the giant speakers and amplifiers used by the worship team to shake you up and keep you from dozing off. Of course, when Bishop Stephen and Pastor Allen speak, everyone listens.

However, not all the facilities at the church are modern. There is no running water or modern bathroom facilities. Instead, there is a .. well .. sort of an outhouse. One must have great flexibility, good knees, and balance to make sure you don't fall on the floor or worse yet, into the hole meant for other things. Washing your hands after using the "facility" is a 5 gallon water cooler and a bottle of liquid soap and some paper towels for drying. As for water, Kibichoi has a well that was hand dug. It is an amazing 136 feet deep and was dug completely by hand. The well was constructed for \$12,000 from funds raised by GMI in 2012. As you can see, donations do get put to excellent use. One interesting thing about the well is that it is the woman's job to extract water from

the well. It takes about 75 turns of the crank wheel to get a single bucket of water which weighs about 50 lbs. The water is extremely clean and good for consumption straight from the well (but not for us newbie's to Africa). However, the men's job is to tote the water to wherever it is needed. The next project for Kibichoi is to install a submersible pump and a tower supporting a large water tank. The pump will fill the tank thus providing the church and surrounding residents access to ample water with good water pressure. Perhaps flushing toilets will be next ?



PORTABLE HYGIENE



THE WELL AT KIBICHOI

Prior to Bishop Stephen and Pastor Allen taking the podium, we all joined in with the praise and worship activities. Like in the other churches, there was much merriment and rhythmic music that entered your soul as well as your body. You could not help swaying and dancing in place to the music. We were even treated to some children performing dance moves and we watched two young Maasai men dancing and doing their famous high jumps called "Adamu." They can jump straight up a foot or more propelled only through leg strength as their arms stay by their side. It was amazing to see them so far off the ground.



PRAISE AND WORSHIP AT KIBICHOI

Following the praise and worship, Bishop Stephen said a few words and then introduced Pastor Allen. Pastor began to preach and was translated throughout the sermon. He began with the idea of appreciation for all good things. In Kenya, when the leader wants to thank people or applaud them for their offerings, they say, “Please let us appreciate....” Passta Aallen, or the worship team, or the donors, whatever they want you to applaud. It’s a really cool thing that they say. He acknowledged the importance of appreciating the good people and things in our lives. He encouraged us to find something good about a person and speak it to them.

He talked about delegating responsibilities and helping each other as the enemy seeks to divide people. Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs. Psalm 119:63 “I am the companion of all those who fear you, Lord.”

He explained how the enemy hates to see Christians get along together. The devil is always seeking to divide the Church, to break people apart. To further amplify this,

Pastor used the metaphor of the sheep and the wolf. The wolf is the enemy who is very powerful and strong. He could kill every one of the sheep but he doesn't because he sees them all together and doesn't believe he can conquer them. Instead, he scares and divides them. Then he focuses on the one and then he kills the one. That's what the devil does to the Church. Pastor then notes that in unity, here in the Church, you are powerful! The enemy will not attack you in mass. That's why Jesus called us to be together. "The foundation of every strong church is the people who are in companionship together."

Ecc 4:9 "Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor."

At the end of the services, Bishop Stephen announced that Christine and Dennis were going to perform some karate demonstrations with the children outside in front of the church. This was their queue to change out of their Sunday clothes and into their gi's.

Once they were ready, all of the children gathered outside with great anticipation. The weather was perfect but the ground was quite hilly which made getting a solid footing a bit of a challenge. Nonetheless, the team carried on and successfully demonstrated a couple of katas and discussed the proper use of self-defense. Christine led the children in kicking and punching techniques and all the children joined in. They had a blast! In fact, they even tried to emulate one of the advanced katas.



CHRISTINE TEACHING PROPER KICKING TECHNIQUES

One of the highlights of the demonstration was an activity called a Sanchin test. In this exercise, one's strength and stamina is tested. The test involves one participant testing the stance, meaning the ability to hold your ground, and physical strength by punching and kicking the one being tested. For this demo, Christine tested Dennis by striking him hard in the abdomen, latissimus dorsi muscle (lats), kicking to the thighs and calves, and pushing hard against his stance to see if she could knock him over. The

strikes were hard enough to hear over the loud music and the reaction from the children was interesting. At first there were some gasps, but when they saw that Dennis was not injured, they giggled and laughed as Christine executed her test with a big smile (she likes to hit him). One young boy asked if he could try hitting Dennis. Dennis agreed, so he came up and gave it his best shot. When he saw there was no reaction from Dennis, a line began to form with eager young boys and girls, and an adult or two, each punching as hard as they could. Some young boys even cycled through the line three or four times trying hard to improve their striking technique. At one point, some of the children questioned whether Dennis was wearing some sort of armor or something, so he showed them that under the gi there was nothing but him.



KATATE DEMOs AT KIBICHOI





KARATE PUNCHING BAG

At this point, many of the young boys wanted to demonstrate their own strength so they lined up for Dennis to strike them in their lats, of course with great care! In the end, everyone got the chance to participate and they learned that body conditioning improves strength that can help one absorb body blows in a conflict. As can be seen above, the children of Kibichoi really got into the Karate scene



HANDING OUT PRESENTS AT KIBICHOI

Following the karate fun, as at previous visits, we blessed the children with Bible verse bookmarks, spectrum (rainbow) glasses, and colored glow stick bracelets. All of us participated in handing out the goodies and making bracelets and of course the children were thrilled.



KID MAGNETS

The children of Kibichoi are very affectionate and they were drawn to Patricia, our matriarch. They are also fascinated by cell phones and wanted to see pictures of our families, pets, themselves, and any other things that caught their eyes. Even little toddlers wanted to snuggle up with Patricia.

Our Final Day

Wednesday the 21st of August was our departure day but our flight was scheduled to leave at 11 PM (Nairobi time). This gave us time to catch up on some serious shopping for souvenirs. Some of the team needed to pick up just a couple of mementoes to remember our time in Kenya, but Christine had 9 wonderful grandchildren to shop for. Needless to say, that took some thought and planning. Pastor Allen suggested we go back to the Utamaduni Gift Shop, the hidden gem we visited on our first day since it had the most variety and the prices were reasonable. In reality, Utamaduni has two floors and dozens of rooms holding a plethora of goods. This made it easier to find what you are looking for. They had rooms for infants and toddler clothing and toys, rooms for safari gear, high end jewelry, trinkets, tee shirts, glassware, wooden carvings of African wildlife, coffee (a Kenyan specialty), and anything else you could possibly think of. We spent about an hour and a half there and some of us left with our wallets and purses a bit lighter. Everyone who purchased goods were pleased with the quality and variety.

After our shopping spree, Pastor Allen had made reservations for dinner at the African Heritage House in Nairobi. We had visited this place earlier in the week for lunch and a tour. It truly is an African treasure. The house is pretty much a museum, restaurant, and bed and breakfast. We were able to enjoy our last meal there with an incredible view of the Nairobi National Park. This unique African mud architecture was the perfect place to relax before our long journey home.



AFRICAN HERITAGE HOUSE, NAIROBI, KENYA



SCENES FROM THE AFRICAN HERITAGE HOUSE

The house was built by American Alan Donovan, co-founder of the African Heritage Pan African Galleries. He was once a photographer for National Geographic. He loved the country so much he decided to settle there and he collected African artifacts from all over the continent. The African Heritage House is the most photographed house in Africa.



RELAXING AT THE AFRICAN HERITAGE HOUSE

EPILOGUE

The Mission trip to Nairobi Kenya was an absolutely beautiful, spiritual, cultural, and unforgettable event. We were blessed by the Holy Spirit and able to spend time with each of the three church congregations we visited. Bishop Stephen and his family are generous ambassadors for the Bible Truth Revival Church as well as incredible hosts. Stephen's son John and daughter Jane and his wife Monica were gracious and kind and all of them helped make our trip not only memorable, but efficient and exciting.

All of us wish to extend a very special thanks to our family at Grace Ministries International (GMI) for their extraordinary financial support of this mission. Without you this entire trip would not have been possible for many of us. We hope these notes and pictures give you a better idea of where your donations to the Africa fund go and how much Bishop Stephen and his church and community appreciate our gifts.

We encourage each one of you to consider going on a mission trip in the future. Based on this writer's experience, it will surely be a life changing time for you and one that is blessed by God.



YOUR NAIROBI KENYA TEAM

