

Jim Harries News and Prayer Letter from Kenya

Vulnerable Mission Progress

It has been good to have had 9 days of vulnerable mission conferences in the UK and in Germany over the last few months. The conferences and consultations have given many opportunities for detailed discussion on critical issues in mission. That is – how to carry out Christian mission other than on the back of Western power. Give thanks for the many conversations engaged and the various progress made.

To see the various papers that were presented go to vulnerablemission.org

Encouraging church leaders and other believers, is the main aim of an international within-Africa trip I have planned for July to August 2015 as follows:

15th to 23rd July, Coptic Orthodox Church, Lubumbashi, DRC (Congo). (I plan to fly there from Nairobi. All other travel on this trip should be by bus or train.)

23rd to 28th July, in Zambia, visiting and encouraging missionaries and old friends.

29th July to 3rd August, Dodoma, Tanzania, with Church of God people.

3rd to 8th August. Babati, Tanzania, with Church of God people.

8th to 13th August, at Mbulu, Tanzania, with Church of God people.

13th to 18th August, at Singida, Tanzania, with Church of God Fellowship people.

18th to 24th August, at Mwanza in Tanzania, with Mennonite people.

24th to 26th August, at Musoma in Tanzania, with Coptic Orthodox Church.

26th to 31st August, around Migori in Kenya, with Zion Harvest Church.

31st August – back home to Yala in Kenya.



Some of the children at my home

Report on Children in my Home in Kenya (2015)

I currently have 13 children staying with me in my home in Kenya, as below:

Christine, aged 17, has managed to complete primary school exams, so is now happy to be a secondary school student.

Zachary, aged 19, completed his secondary schooling, passed well, and is looking forward to possible other options including further study, having already found work. *

Michael, aged 13, decided to repeat his year in school to improve his grade. He remains small for his age, but perhaps it won't be for long.

Michelle, aged 19, is maturing and helpful in the home.

Laura, aged 12, has been relieved of some prefecting responsibilities at school, which hopefully means her grades will pick up again.

Stella, aged 21, came back with her baby for a while, but has since moved to friends and gone back to secondary school.*

Toby, aged 3, is Stella's baby. He was back for a few months, but is now living with an aunt.*

David, aged 18, has become more and more enthusiastic about football.

Andrew, aged 13, is growing up fast, and in need for maturity as he meets the challenges that this entails.

Paul, aged 11 is doing well; he is careful, thoughtful and considerate.

Alison, aged 12, continues to gain confidence although also likes to be quiet and keep herself to herself.

Yvonne, aged 7, has matured to primary school. She is playful and outgoing.

Dusty, aged 7, has settled into life in a family where food is regularly on the table and putting aside some of the issues he had to deal with when previously with his grandma.

Diana. Aged 10, is a bright hardworking girl who came to me in January. She always seems to be thoughtful.

Yvonne, aged 7, came in January, and is beginning her primary schooling.

David, aged 9, can be forthright in his speech, and is enjoying having a large group of friends to play with. (David came in January.)

* No longer staying with me permanently. (False names used throughout.)

Back from Europe

The first days and weeks back in Kenya after being in Europe can be very interesting. This is because my head still thinks somewhat in European style. But the context I am in no longer tallies with that thinking. I find I have to be careful on the decisions that I make in my first month, so as not to misread local situations.

Being in Europe, is having one's head pulled in a certain direction. Coming back, I always seem to think that things should have changed in my absence. Some aspects of the culture here are so incredible to Europeans. When one stays in Europe those aspects of culture can seem to be inadmissible. Coming back, because directly and indirectly people have told me that those cultural contents are no longer here, it is as if I myself doubt them. Reality can come as a bit of a shock.



*Helen Stainsby, supported by Andover Baptist Church
outside the new church building where she ministers
in Poland*

America in 2016?

I am approaching my proposed 2016 trip to America a little differently than before. Previously, I would go 'on faith', believing that funds would become available, once I had commitments from people who said they would host me and give me opportunity to share about vulnerable mission and related concerns with students and others. This time, before committing myself to a 2 month trip to the USA in 2016, I am looking for a designated gift to the tune of \$7000. This is to cover my travel costs, plus ongoing fixed costs such as pension, keeping my household running in Kenya etc. If I don't get the \$7000, then I will not make the trip. Anyone who wants to make sure I go, please contribute towards the necessary funding. (Contact Peter Stagg at: <peterdavidstagg@yahoo.co.uk>

What have you achieved?

In a meeting in the UK a month or so back someone asked me what I had felt that I had achieved in my time as a missionary. This is not a question I often ask myself. Even now I am reluctant to look at life that way. All that one does as a Christian is after all by the grace of God. Yet at the same time I felt it was an important question, and that by the grace of God I have 'achieved' an incredible amount. It is hard to know where to begin. I won't even make mention below of the three years I spent teaching agriculture in Zambia. I share a few 'achievements' in this way because my work is mostly 'out of sight' to my supporters. Also, because I am amazed over how God has led and enabled.

My first 'achievement' is survival. One frequently hears accounts of people who set out on missionary careers in Africa and elsewhere and who after just a few years or less have to turn around and go home. I have heard many would-be missionaries lament over circumstances that prevented them from serving or that cut their service short. I consider it an enormous privilege still to be in foreign missionary service 27 years later.

I consider it an enormous privilege to have had supporters stick with me for almost three decades. I could not do what I do or live the life that I live without the backing and prayer of churches and individuals in the UK and Germany. Things have not always been easy. The fact that they have stuck with me through thick and thin speaks volumes.

We ran extension Bible teaching programmes for 18 years here in Kenya. After being initiated in 1994, they finally drew to a close in 2012. In that time hundreds have participated in our classes. We have reached thousands or even many 10s of thousands, if one includes the endless churches we have visited. Often a team of us would visit a church, share the Word and encourage the congregation, then inform them of our classes. At times we had up to eleven separate classes running at eleven different locations in any week. For a number of years these classes ran in Siaya as well as in Yala, my home town-ship. Many of the hundreds of people we taught are now ministering in churches and giving Christian witness around this area of Kenya.



UK vulnerable mission consultation, Oxford
23rd April 2015

I taught part-time at Kima International School of Theology (KIST) from 1997 to 2011. In that time hundreds of students went through KIST. There were many valuable discussions and challenges. At times, my role was holding the school together in the face of many divisive forces. I occupied most of the key leadership positions. I was able to introduce many students to very real issues in African Christianity. I was able to draw on my experience in local churches to flavour my classes with indigenous ‘scents and flavours’. Many of my students are now in key leadership positions in East Africa and beyond.

Some of the above teaching has spawned various movements of God’s Word and God’s Spirit. Around Yala particularly – indigenously-led theological education programmes have been spawned, inspired by our previous long-running programme. Seeing some strong churches increasingly teach a profound application of Christian belief to indigenous circumstances shows me that KIST students have taken some of what I taught to heart. Thus I can travel widely and meet one-time students using great wisdom in taking God's work forwards. In Yala, many people continue to encourage me by recounting how their time in our Bible-teaching programmes helped them to build a foundation of understanding in God’s word.

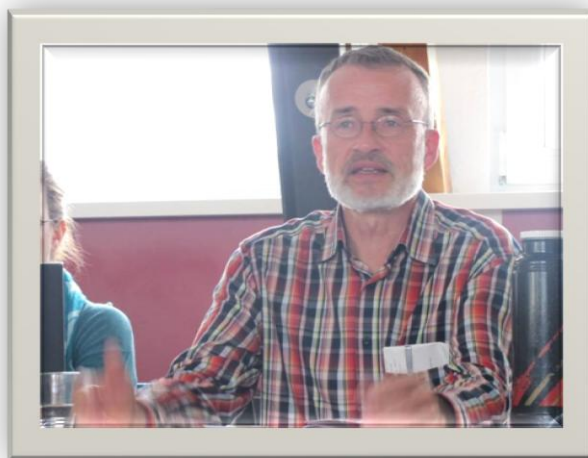


*Enjoying lively discussion, vulnerable mission in
Stuttgart, Germany, May 2015*

The above bible-training continues to open numerous doors in and around Yala. I attend numerous events in my home church and in other churches. Everywhere

I get a warm welcome. This privileges me to encourage young men who are planting churches, as well as others who can find ministry difficult. I am enabled to speak words of encouragement into numerous difficult pastoral situations. It is very evident that numerous Yala people know whenever they see me moving, that I am on the Lord's business. That inspires them to so occupy themselves. This also extends beyond Yala to other parts of Kenya and into Uganda and especially Tanzania.

Fifteen years ago the thought that I might one day acquire a PhD seemed like a crazy dream. In 2007 that dream was actualised. Despite my enormous geographical isolation, I have been able to remain at the cutting edge of academic research. Thus I have been enabled to participate in numerous conferences in the USA, UK and Germany. Many of these conferences we have ourselves organised (as the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission). In addition to conferences, I now have 5 books published and the sixth on its way. The number of my published articles matches that of many university professors in the West. I have been an active participant in numerous lively discussion forums about Christian anthropology, missions, development, theology and other related topics over the internet. Of late I have been able to expand my teaching circle by offering instruction in the Swahili and Luo languages to missionaries working in this part of Kenya. Teaching language is a good way, if not the best way, of passing on important cultural knowledge. I often receive emails from missionaries and their supporters in far flung parts of the world, telling me how they are being challenged by and are responding to my writing about vulnerable mission.



Frank Paul, chairman of our vulnerable mission board in Germany

Another area of great personal joy, is the part I have played

in the lives of numerous children. Many of the children whom I have at one time informally adopted are now adults working for their living and raising their own families. The total number of children I have



Some relatives on my visit to Germany in May 2015

informally adopted over the last 18 years is around 25. Half of that number are now independently pursuing their own careers. Those who remain are all at school. All of them to my knowledge are following Jesus. Some are very active in their churches and very concerned to bring up their own families in a Christian way. (One has just resigned from teaching in order to do evangelism and other Christian ministry.) All of them are conscientious citizens seeking to be salt to their communities. It is a privilege to be able occasionally to visit them, and immediately get that relationship of bonding of parent to child, enabling me to continue to encourage them as they move on in their lives.

I could say more. I could add the numerous students I have engaged with in the USA, UK and Germany. My



Walking in the Norfolk countryside we found an African-shaped hole in a tree

prayers and visits to the sick and suffering around my home in Yala. The wonderful relationships that I very much cherish with biological and church family in Europe and America. I rejoice in my good health that means that my bicycle remains my main mode of transport in Kenya. I thank for my ability to speak fluently in the Swahili and Luo languages. I rejoice at the privilege I have of relating to the Coptic Orthodox Church as an insider and the relationships this has given me with Egyptian people. I rejoice at the privileged access I have to minister to both staff and patients at the Coptic hospital in Maseno, Kenya. I could go on and on ... I give thanks to God for many of the enormous privileges in service and ministry that I have enjoyed in the last 27 years of missionary service.

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To: Western Kenya, working in the region of Yala/Maseno with some extended ministry to other parts of East Africa.

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