

Report of my 3-week trip into southern Kenya and Tanzania, July 2017 (by Jim Harries)

Dear Friends,

It was a joy to find one of my girls (lived with me for 10 years) happily settled living with her siblings. Ten years ago, on the death of her parents, there was nothing. Ten years later, her brothers have built up a decent homestead!

Almost all the first night at my next hosts I spent vomiting! I got sick on arrival, and got better after I had left! Malaria is becoming a less treatable and increasingly dangerous pain, it seems. I did have opportunity to share at a fellowship before we got to that home, so before I started vomiting. I also spent some quality time with an ex bible college student.

A crowded church with customary PA system made Sunday into a dancing experience! It had been 15 years since I was last in this area, near the Tanzania border. The pastor is also assistant bishop to my home church in Kenya.

Crossing the border was uneventful. I found the standard of bus-travel in Tanzania has risen. A Mennonite bible college that was collapsing when I last visited 2 years previously, I found booming! My Coptic hosts were as always very friendly and accommodating. It was good to share with and encourage them.

Four hours on by bus, in Mwanza, I was again hosted by a Coptic church, for two nights. Mwanza, the second city of Tanzania, is a city of hills that are strewn with boulders. Population pressure has people build up steep hill-slopes. Even the Coptic church was perched on a hillside. Living on the hill, keeps the air fresh.

Travelling by bus



Mwanza.



View from the Coptic church.



Coptic church, on a hillside.

Eight hours on in Singida, an ex-KIST student, now a bishop, welcomed me to his home. Had excellent fellowship with the church, a lively group of mostly youngish people, proud of recently having completed a dvd of them singing, dancing, and praising God.

Singida.



Church of God, Singida town



Five hours on, at the administrative capital of Tanzania of Dodoma, I was hosted this time by German missionaries. Some sad stories from the church that I was also planning to visit, severely limited my ministry opportunities. It was excellent to get to know a few German missionaries better, in anticipation of speaking at their retreat next April.

Four hours on, now heading north, I was in Babati, the HQ of the Church of God in Tanzania. All Church of God bishops were once my students. The church of God here is booming and bustling, rejoicing at their being able to continue to function recently free from American missionary control. 'Co-incidentally', I was there for their annual bible school graduation, and so witnessed 18 students receiving their certificates.

Babati – headquarters of Church of God, Tanzania.



Baptismal service on shores of lake Babati



Bible school graduation

A two-hour trip from Babati took us up a range of mountains to a much colder location, with a totally different feel, and vegetation. The cold was a shock. Perhaps what I valued most here, similar to other locations, was the opportunity just to spend time with my ex-student, now a bishop, talking about challenges faced by the church and life in general. I also met a Norwegian missionary involved in promoting local-language bibles.

Mbulu – up on the mountains.



Bishop and his donkey



Visiting the home I stayed in 2 years ago.



Church building, Mbulu

From there, I had a two-day trip, through Nairobi, back home.

Nairobi



Entrances to Coptic hospital at night



A sub-theme in all of the above, has been the 'amazing' new President of Tanzania. Two years ago when I was last in Tanzania, he was campaigning for election. His crusade against all sorts of corruption and government-level abuses seem to be transforming the country. There is much positive feeling as he is bold enough to stand up to corrupt opposition.

Another impression: Tanzania is besotted with sexuality! Perhaps because of a major Muslim presence, it is hard to take a Christian stand on certain moral issues? Everywhere, on buses in cyber cafs, restaurants, videos of beautiful scantily dressed Tanzanian girls being seduced by handsome men driving plush cars, are in your face.

So, there are just a few impressions.

Jim