

Subject: Savuto -- Hope for Brotherhood in Kenya

Saturday 26 January 2006

Dear Friends and Family,

"The real differences around the world today are not between Jews and Arabs; Protestants and Catholics; Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. The real differences are between those who embrace peace and those who would destroy it; between those who look to the future and those who cling to the past; between those who open their arms and those who are determined to clench their fists." ~William J. Clinton, 1997

This past Tuesday afternoon Bill, Claudia Freund, a mission partner from Germany, and I traveled to Nairobi. Presiding Bishop, Rev. Dr. Stephen Kanyaru M'Impwii, had invited us to come visit some of the displaced persons camps. This coming week the three of us will return to Nairobi and travel with a team from the MCK Conference to visit the camps in Nakuru and Molo. Before I tell you about our experience in Nairobi, I would like to share some facts with you so that you can better understand the situation here.

In late December 2002, President Mwai Kibaki was elected President following 24 years of President Daniel Arap Moi. Kenya had become exceedingly corrupt during the Moi years. Corruption was part of daily life for everyone. From 1997 – 2002 the economy grew by an annual average of 1.5%. President Moi refused to acknowledge that HIV/AIDS was a problem and the percentage of Kenyan's that were infected was 10 – 13%. Under Kibaki's Government, the economy began to recover after 2002, registering 2.8% growth in 2003, 4.3% in 2004, 5.8% in 2005, and 6.1% in 2006 and a projected 7.2% in 2007. HIV/AIDS percentage dropped to 6% of the population in the last 5 years. The Government's tax revenues went from Sh183 billion in 2002 to Sh376 billion in 2006 and the Treasury expected to get Sh429 billion in the 2007/8 fiscal year which is about 21 per cent of the gross domestic product. In five years the Per Capita income has gone from \$445 per year per person to \$1,200. Under Kibaki's Government, Kenya experienced remarkable economic growth.

In 2003 the Kibaki Government provided free education for the 8 years of primary school. Attendance has climbed to 92% of Kenyan children attending primary school.

Tourism rose 70% from 2002 to 2005 and has continued to grow. "The Tourism sector contributed a whopping Sh100 billion to the economy last year (2006), making it the country's top foreign exchange earner." ([The East African Standard](#) (Nairobi), 9 May 2007)

In the year 2007 Kenya won the United Nations Public Service Reform Award for Africa which is given for Improving transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in the Public Service. "The United Nations Public Service Awards is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. It rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions to a more effective and responsive public administration in countries worldwide. Through an annual competition, the UN Public Service Awards promotes the role, professionalism and visibility of public service." (Global Forum on Reinventing Government Website) This indicates that although there is still corruption in Kenya, under Kibaki there have been great strides to reduce corruption.

From international observers it has been documented that the election held on 27 December 2007 there were discrepancies from both the PNU (Kibaki's party) and ODM (Odinga's party).

The population of Kenya is approximately 36.9 million. The population is made up of peoples from 40+ ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups are: Kikuyu 22%, Luyha 14%, Luo 14%, Kalenjin 11%, Kamba 11%, Kisii 6%, Meru 5%.

President Kibaki is Kikuyu, Vice President Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka is Kamba, Raila Odinga is Luo and William Samoei Ruto is Kalenjin and Past President Daniel Moi was Kalenjin. (Ruto is Raila Odinga's right arm in ODM)

After the 1992 and 1997 elections there were ethnic disputes with the Kalenjin's attacking the Kikuyu settled in "their" area. In 2002 there were no ethnic disputes though the Kalenjin and Luo live throughout Kenya.

Today in the Nation, the major Kenyan newspaper, there was an article about a report given by the Human Right's Watch, an international body, stating "We have evidence that ODM politicians and local leaders actively fomented some post-election violence, and the authorities should investigate and make sure it stops now." Raila Odinga's supporters have consistently said, "No Raila, No peace."

January 1, 2008 a church was burned with women and children inside. "In Kiambaa, a village in the Rift Valley about five hours' drive from Nairobi, this boils down to Kalenjins and Luos, the tribe of Odinga, against Kikuyus, Kibaki's tribe. It was Kikuyus who were burned to death Tuesday in the Kenya Assemblies of God Church. The church was simple, made of mud and sticks, and about the size of a tennis court. Over the weekend, several hundred Kikuyus sought refuge here. They were guarded by farmers who used their tools for protection. But when a mob of 800 people showed up Tuesday and killed several of the men, they fled. They said they had to watch as the mob blocked people's escape. Then they had to listen to the screams. "They killed the women, the children, the cows, everything," said John Njorge, who tried to defend the church. "We couldn't save anybody." Herald Tribune 3 Jan. 08

Today there are between 700 – 1000 dead and 250,000 – 500,000 displaced persons (every source has different numbers). The vast majority of those displaced and killed are the Kikuyu, Kisii, Luyha, Kamba, and Meru ethnic groups living in Western, Nyanza, and Rift Valley. The homes of these people were looted and burned. Their businesses and crops burned and their cattle, sheep, and goats stolen. They have no place to go and literally nothing but the clothes on their back.

Maua Methodist Hospital in cooperation with the Nyambene Synod of the Methodist Church in Kenya is raising money and collecting food and clothing for the displaced persons.

I will end my fact giving section by quoting an article about our area of Kenya that appeared in the Nation on Thursday 17 Jan. 2008. The headline was "Rallies Flop in Central and Eastern". The article stated "Residents in Central and Eastern provinces ignored protest rallies called by ODM. In Meru and Chuka, the rallies failed to take place yesterday. **Residents ignored calls to attend a rally at Maua Stadium. Instead, they took part in a walk to raise donations for internally displaced persons. They later gathered at St. Joseph's Methodist Church where they prayed for peace.**" I am so proud of the Methodist Church and people of Maua.

AND NOW FOR OUR EXPERIENCE IN NAIROBI IN THE DISPLACED CAMP:

We spent time talking with Presiding Bishop. He shared that he was in contact with pastors around Kenya and that the needs were tremendous. The MCK has 10 pastors in Western Kenya where people are being killed and property burned by the Luo. They have reported that many of their Methodist Church members have lost everything. There is literally no money to pay any pastors as the women and children have left and the businesses and farms have been destroyed. Also churches and schools have been burned. The local people pay the pastors and most of the

local people have nothing. The Presiding Bishop explained there were “Immediate Needs” to feed and clothe and care for the thousands of people that have been displaced. Then there will be “Long Term Needs” to rebuild churches, schools, homes, and businesses and resettle the thousands of displaced persons. The Methodist Church in Kenya is working with the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, who have formed a group called ‘Tumaini Na UNdugu” (Hope for Brotherhood).

Presiding Bishop had just visited the Nakuru Displaced Persons Camp on Tues. 22 Jan. and was overwhelmed. He stated there were at least 3000 people there and while he was there three lorries came bringing more people. Also three children died while he was in visiting the Camp. The Methodist Church had taken food and medical supplies to Nakuru to help with the most urgent of needs. He spoke of the problems with sanitation, food, clothing, and providing tents.

We then left to visit two Displaced Person Camps with Lucy Kaindio, Women Fellowship Co-ordinator and Ruth Ketyenya, Health & Wholeness Co-ordinator from the Conference Office. First, we planned to visit the camp that was located in the Nairobi Sports Ground. Bill was driving our vehicle and due to heavy traffic it took a long time to get to N’gong Road, where the camp was located. After we had driven a short distance on N’gong Road we realized there was something major going on in front of us. Hundreds of people were walking along the road and the traffic was backed up significantly. After a short time, Ruth recommended we turn around and go to the other camp as it was obvious this was a demonstration. It turned out to be an ODM called Prayer service for the 28 people that Odinga alleged were killed by policemen (28 of the 700+). While prayers were happening, a group of young men with the group blocked N’gong Road and started to abuse the drivers and burn and/or destroy vehicles. The police shot tear gas canisters to break up the young men blocking the road and broke up the Prayer service. Shortly after Raila Odinga and the other top officials were safely whisked away in their cars, the crowd went wild and tried to burn the Kenyan Telecom Building. They managed to burn one room, loot the offices, destroy numerous vehicles, and beat innocent people. We felt very fortunate that we had the opportunity to turn around and leave the area before the violence began. There has been much violence in the slums of Nairobi – Kibera and parts of Mathare slum but as we drove Lucy and Ruth shared that Mlango Kubwa, a part of Mathare slum, and Makuru Njenga, though multi-ethnic, had refused to fight and had chosen peace.

We drove across Nairobi to a camp that was located at the Karura Community Church. It is a small camp caring for 170 - 290 displaced persons, mostly Kikuyu from Timbaroa and Burnt Forest in the Rift Valley. The camp is located in a very wealthy area so is fortunate to have many of its needs met. There are so many young Kenyan volunteers working at the camp (run totally by volunteers). The only mzungu (European) was a doctor that has volunteered her time to run a clinic that has been set up and has cared for 210 people. That day the Government had sent out nurses to do a mass immunization. There were many tents set up with five persons per tent. Wood had been donated to use for cooking and the displaced women did the cooking. Two rooms were filled with clothing and food for the displaced persons. There was a make-shift school with classes for all grades from 1 – 12th being taught by volunteers from Kenyatta University who have not been able to start back to university. Local mission hospitals had donated medical supplies and even admitted three persons from the camp with no charge.



(A few of the tents used to house the afternoon displaced persons)



(A baby being washed inside the school area near stored bags of rice & maize)



(Children getting set up for their school lessons.)

We were so amazed to hear how the Kenyan people had helped the camp. Recently a Kenyan woman had taken 25 of Karuru Camp's primary students and 25 students from another camp in Limuru and will educate and care for them for one year. Individual Kenyan's had taken 3 – 5 families and would provide food, a place to stay, help them settle, and find work in the area. In Limuru 200 people had been absorbed into the community. The Ministry of Education is doing School mapping, which means they are contacting Government Secondary Schools asking them how many students they could take and then placing the secondary students in those schools.

After a tour of the camp and spending time talking to several of the volunteers, we had the opportunity to talk with Raphael, the man who helped bring all the people to this camp. Raphael is a Kikuyu who has lived in Timbaroa since 1972 when he was in primary school. He bought land in Timbaroa and settled with his family, a wife and four children of his own and two orphans. Timbaroa is a village with four large farms surrounding it. Raphael is a Veterinarian's Assistant and owned his own business in the center of Timbaroa. He dealt mostly with heights and weights in his business so worked with Kalenjin's who were butchers. He shared that he had gone to school with William Ruto, ODM Leader.

In Timbaroa the violence began the day that it was announced that President Kibaki had won the election. The violence began at the largest farm, with the looting, fighting and burning of many of the farm houses. Raphael heard commotion and went to help his friends at the farm fight off the Kalenjin raiders. He stated everything was done so quickly and efficiently, it was clear it had been planned in advance. The next day the violence began again and again Raphael went out to help defend his colleagues and friends. He explained that he made several observations that day. The number one observation was the Kikuyu were so outnumbered by the Kalenjin raiders it was foolishness to resist. Number two there were three different and distinct groups of Kalenjin raiders. The first group of raiders looted the Kikuyu houses and frightened the home owners. Second, the Kalenjin fighters to chase away the people or kill them if necessary. The Kalenjin fighters were armed with bows and poison tipped arrows while the Kikuyu had rocks and sticks to defend themselves. Finally, there was a group of raiders who came to burn the Kikuyu homes. Raphael explained the raiders were using petrol bombs that they threw into the houses. The petrol bombs would explode and quickly burn the house to the ground. The third observation Raphael made was how well organized and planned everything was. It was clear this had not been planned in a day or two. Raphael went on to say that each group of raiders was led by a Kalenjin from Timbaroa, a neighbor or business friend. The large number of young raiders that accompanied the Kalenjin leaders were young Kalenjin men that no one knew or had seen before.

Raphael explained that he watched as a group of young raiders disassembled the only corn grinder in the community and carried the parts away while the police watched in silence. After the young men had set fire to the grinder and were running away, the police, all Kalenjins, fired into the air.

The night of Dec. 31st there were 5 killed, 2 women and 3 men with 3 missing, who were later found dead in Raphael's area. There were 30 people seriously injured. Raphael helped carry the injured to the District Health Center only to find all the staff, Kalenjin, were gone. He and three other Kikuyu veterinarian assistants took care of these wounded people, suturing deep cuts, cleaning and bandaging wounds. One Kalenjin patient assistant who worked at the Health Center returned to help in the care of the wounded. Raphael called the Head of the Police for the entire region to ask if he would send help to transport the wounded to hospitals. The Head of the Police, a Kalenjin, said yes, help was on the way but the help did not come for 3 days.

All the Kikuyu homes in the four farms were burnt. Raphael, whose plot of land was in the town center, had 60 people staying with him while others went to the local church to find refuge. He stated that the people had hoped something good would happen soon. On Jan. 1st when the people learned that a church had been burned to the ground killing many Kikuyu woman and children, every one began to cry and plead with God for help. He said everyone was filled with

fear. He realized he needed to do something, NOW. Raphael did not own a vehicle, but one of the men staying with him owned a truck. He asked if he could drive the truck, with as many people as possible, to Nakuru and hopefully safety. The owner of the truck explained that he had no gasoline in the truck and there was no gasoline in the town. Raphael called a friend in Nairobi and asked the friend if he could bring him 20 liters of gasoline. Unknown to Raphael, his friend was a pastor at Karura Community Church. Pastor Joseph bought 20 liters of gasoline and began his drive to Timbaroa but was stopped at a road block in Nakuru. (The road block was manned by Kalenjin people requiring everyone to show their ID card. If you were not Kalenjin or Luo you could not pass the road block.) The Pastor called Raphael to explain that he was stopped in Nakuru. Pastor Joseph had heard that a group of trucks was coming from Uganda and would pass through Timbaroa and perhaps Raphael and others could come to Nakuru on one of the trucks. The trucks did come through but were filled with displaced persons, so Raphael begged to buy 20 liters of gasoline from one of the truck drivers. One truck driver sold him 20 liters. He then loaded 53 people in his friend's truck, mostly women and children, and drove to Nakuru. There he met Pastor Joseph. With the pastor's help, Raphael hired three more trucks and went back to pick up more of the Kikuyu people in Timbaroa. When the trucks reached Nakuru some of the Kikuyu people who had family or friends living in Nakuru stayed there. Raphael filled those spots with other people who were fleeing the Kalenjins and Luos, from Burnt Forest and Kisumu. There were 272 displaced people who arrived in Nairobi at Pastor Joseph's home. There was no room for anyone to bring anything with them. Thus most people literally had only the clothes on their backs. Quickly they moved to the Community Church grounds and the camp began. .

As we were finishing our conversation, Raphael's phone rang. He talked for a few minutes and then shared that the call was from a close friend still in Timbaroa. The man had said that two more men were killed the night before when they went to one of the fields to find some food for the men left behind. Two other men are missing and presumed dead. The men were caught in the fields and slashed to death.

We asked Raphael what he would do in the future. He suddenly looked far away. He struggled with his words. He didn't know. His home was Timbaroa – it was the only home he knew but he wasn't sure he could ever go home. There had been violence before in 1992 and he had barely escaped death. "How many lives did he have?", he asked.

He added, "I am not as bad off as some. My friend, a Kikuyu truck driver married a Kalenjin woman. They had children and had lived in Rift Valley for years. His wife and children were taken from him by Kalenjin raiders and he was chased away and told to never return. Without his family, he is devastated." "At least I have my family", stated Raphael.

Sadly ethnic cleansing is taking a tremendous toll in Kenya. The Kikuyu, Kamba, Kisii, Luyha and Meru, in particular, are being chased from Nyanza, Western Kenya and the Rift Valley by the Luo and Kalenjin.

250,000 – 500,000 displaced people have lost loved ones, their home and all that was in it, their live stock, and perhaps most devastating of all, their friends and neighbors who they trusted. Where can they go? How can we heal this nation? How can we rebuild Kenya?

Raphael gave us the answer. "If the politicians can make peace, so can we!" Oh God, let it be!

If you or your church would like to donate to help the Methodist Church in Kenya help thousands of Displaced Persons you can wire funds to:

ACCOUNT NAME: Methodist Church In Kenya – Projects
BANK: Barclays Bank of Kenya Ltd
BRANCH: Queens Way House Branch
P.O. Box 30011
NAIROBI

SWIFT NO.: BARCKENX
ACCOUNT NO.: 03-094-2110901

Please email the Presiding Bishop at mckconf@wanachi.com and state the amount wired, the date, name of donor, and that the funds are for "Relief for Displaced Persons".

In His grip,
Jerri & Bill Savuto
savuto@maf.or.ke
Maua Methodist Hospital
Box 63, Maua 60600
Meru North, Kenya

"Maybe we should develop a Crayola bomb as our next secret weapon. A happiness weapon. A beauty bomb. And every time a crisis developed, we would launch one. It would explode high in the air - explode softly - and send thousands, millions, of little parachutes into the air. Floating down to earth - boxes of Crayolas. And we wouldn't go cheap, either - not little boxes of eight. Boxes of sixty-four, with the sharpener built right in. With silver and gold and copper, magenta and peach and lime, amber and umber and all the rest. And people would smile and get a little funny look on their faces and cover the world with imagination." ~Robert Fulghum