

Sunday JANUARY 13th Hoima & Masindi Report

Dear Susan,

After a wonderful lunch and meeting with the new young leaders of the Hoima congregation I left Hoima more relieved and hopeful than I have been since we started this work eleven years ago. The Presbytery is acting like a Presbytery disciplining, ordaining, ruling the congregations with real wisdom. Their discernment that Timothy was not ready for ordination was a great encouragement to me. New elder Francis Katu is the first recipient of our scholarship and will be going to WBC in February. He along with Timothy and the young men being disciplined have developed an excellent ministry plan for the congregation and it is going to grow. If we can encourage the Bless The Children Ministries to come in with community development then this work can thrive. Or better still if our Presbytery would take up the work of serving and supporting the Western Presbytery we would see some exciting things happen.

I am beside myself in joy, in tears that I am feeling good about this again! Seeing both the Presbytery at work and this congregation worshipping my King has brought healing to my soul. If heart break was the cost of this labor then I gladly bear it.

One personal anecdote; on Saturday night I had three dreams in a row that some one was coming to kill me in the morning. The first by knife, the second with a panga the third with a gun. I sat up in bed in fear then I remembered the verse The Lord gave through Greg Berry, "you were not given a Spirit of fear but one of love, power, and self control." I prayed to my Lord I have your love, and you have empowered me grant me self control. I committed my life again into His good hands whatever his purpose. Then He showed me it was a demon terrorizing me. I prayed against the evil and that He would be my shield and sword. I went back to sleep in the peace that I had his work to do. In another part of Uganda that night a pastor and his family were hacked to death over land issues. Blessed be The Lord I am humbled to be alive and His servant in whatever way He chooses.

We arrived in Masindi in a short but very dusty trip. The colonial lodge where we once stayed for 20.00 a night is now 100.00 a night but with a free breakfast. We stayed at Venue the place where I first discovered we were being deceived.

Michael the Pastor at Masindi and his wife Stella Alice were with us on this part of the journey as was Kristofer an elder from Ft. Portal. Kris was my translator in Hoima. Now Michael told us that the people of Masindi New Life Church were waiting for us. They had been at the church since morning. When we arrived at 6:00 pm they were still singing. I began a mini series on what is the Church, using Acts 2:42ff. After an hour of teaching we left them to go to their homes and we went for dinner and bed. Randy stayed in Hoima to conclude his business. The news had been excellent on that front. It appears he has a buyer.

Kris stayed with me and we slept like hibernating bears for eleven hours. Kamanda had to rouse us. We met with Michael and went to see two pieces of property. I was very impressed with Michael. He was well prepared to show us a variety of properties that represented different possibilities of ministry. He had thought about the need for new beginnings and was taking risks and being creative.

At the first property we walked up a hill to a beautiful overview of a valley that will one day be filled with homes. It is four acres in the shape of an L with the long section on the main road. It is near a small stream indicating that there is water on the place. The widow who owns it is a member of the Church. I baptized her grandson Joshua the last time I was here. The boy with Urinary tract problems is her grandson as well. This is a beautiful piece of property. She wants 35 million shillings (\$13059.00)!

The second property was a fabulous 7 acres, surveyed and laid out flat to the west of the city. It is ready for sale none of the usual title issues. The price 40 million per acre. A little too far from the edge of the city. How long before the city reaches?

At a late and long lunch I asked Michael questions. "What kind of church do you want this to be? A city, a village... a ministry to the poor? We talked about how we are there to encourage and serve not to make the decisions or even give opinions... Opinions become the stumbling blocks of manipulation and trying to please. We had lunch at the Lodge. It was expensive but good.

We ran out of time talking about the new order of working through the Presbytery, seeking the advice of Dr. Kefa Sampangi and Kusemererwa Francis. The evening program began at 4:00pm. Kris and I finished the mini-series on Acts 2:42ff. Then we had a wonderful time of question and answer. We left about 8:00 pm for our dinner. Kris and I had a great conversation into the late of the night about the developing Presbytery and the joint need to develop leadership. The twin goals of church planting/economic development and developing elders is the crucial task of the ongoing work. There are not enough leaders to move quickly.

Tuesday morning it was hot by 8 am, generally it was hot all the time. This was going to be a sweater of a morning. We headed off to see another great piece of land. This was south in the undeveloped part of the city. Even though in the municipal boundaries and only three miles from the city center this was the village. High on a hill top overlooking the city with water this three acres was very appealing especially at 25 million (just under \$10,000). The key to the decision is in the gathering of the people who live in these areas and asking them if they want a church there and if they would support it in some way. This is going as far as you can and letting God stop you.

We had a lunch that the Ladies of the church cooked and the men served. It was breaking of bread, fellowship, I did a little teaching of the apostles doctrine and we prayed for a new beginning for this congregation. Then we scooted off to Kampala on a brand new road. Made it in three and a half hours, unheard of!

Reflections: it now seems certain that Randy has concluded his business in Hoima. This will help fund Masindi. The New Life Western Presbytery came through, accepted the responsibility for the two properties and is functioning as a strong body. The Hoima congregation is now free to be a church. The Masindi congregation will soon be freed of the horrid lot and can and will grow.

The last item of our agenda is the incontinent boy. Today I found a urologist and we have booked him for Monday. May The Lord conclude this with the healing of this boy.

Tomorrow I will write about the meetings with the Rev. Titus Baraka and my visit with the Ebys until then my prayers are with you as I expect yours are with me.

With love and affection,
John