

01-26-13

## **Report of Kitale Men & Women's Prison, 8 schools/orphanages, 1 hospital & Pastor Lucas' church**



I haven't had time to journal at all. We have been very busy! So I am trying to type this as we are driving from Bungoma to Kisumu, the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Kenya. It is quite a job trying to type as we bounce along the road, so the team is constantly laughing at me as I am hanging on to the computer and typing at the same time.

### **Arrival in Kitale:**

We were greeted at the gas station in Kitale by Bishop Michael, Rev. George, and many of our Wings Volunteers. They led us to our lovely guest house (Muremba Retreat Center) which had a private setting and feeling of sanctuary. After our 11.5 hour road trip we rejoiced at seeing such a quiet setting, with gardens and trees of colorful flowers and fauna.

The owner, Samina Esmail, was so kind and when she heard we hadn't eaten since breakfast, she quickly prepared egg salad sandwiches for us and we shared the sandwiches with all our new friends. We quickly ate the sandwiches in the van and headed off to Bishop Michael's compound where we were greeted by 90+ people who had traveled to meet us from all over the entire region. (Probably up to 50-75 KM away and some had taken a 6-8 hour matatus van ride from Nairobi to be with us.) They had already prayed all the previous night for our visit and now they greeted us in the outside courtyard.

First Amy and I were led to the office to meet with Warden/Welfare Officer/Pastor Bernard Kipsongut, for him to meet us, understand our mission/vision and real purpose for visiting the prison, and soon we had his welcome and approval. Bernard Kipsongut was a remarkable man of God. I was amazed because as I heard him speak, it seemed like he was taking words from my mouth. He talked of seeing prisoners as children of God. He spoke of teaching that "It is by grace that you enter these gates." We were told he was a very important man and he had walked all the way to Bishop Michael's home, and on top of it had walked alone, and apparently that can be quite dangerous at night. Then we went out into the very dark courtyard with the 90 people, and led them in singing, the bible story of Jesus calming the storm, and prayed for our time together in Kitale.

We were very happy to get to our guest house and then had a delicious dinner outside on the covered patio. It was the first food we had eaten since breakfast at 6:30 am that morning.

We awoke early, toured the city square with all of us in our Wings shirts (we had distributed about 15 Wings shirts to our Kitale team leaders), so we were a unique site in our jade green shirts which stood out totally in the crowds of people.

Then we drove to the Kitale prison. We were greeted by Bernard, he shared some of the prison rules, and we found out that no volunteer groups of our size had ever been in the prison. We were moved by his powerful words when he said, "It is by grace that you enter these gates." They had rented a sound system and we arrived to inmate led singing. They had a large metal covered pavilion where several

hundred men were sitting on benches or standing. Other men were in the shade of the buildings surrounding the courtyard. The sound system actually was for them so they too could hear everything that was said. We had a successful prison party there with the men being really engaged and laughing and singing along. The Sower dramatization involved all our new Wings volunteers and they enjoyed learning a new drama. Everything we did was a demonstration for them.

Next we walked next door to the Women's Prison. Although they had several hundred women in this prison only about 50 women and their children attended the party in a fairly small courtyard. The ladies first greeted us in song. They played a drum, danced, and then two women shared their testimonies. The Warden was a Christian and very welcoming to us and supportive of Wings. It was very hot in the courtyard, but soon we forgot the heat through all our interaction with them.

Next we visited Rev. George's church where we were especially happy to have two little children feel so welcome that they jumped into Deney and Elaine's laps throughout our Wings Program. We next walked through the town, we saw his son's furniture store, visited his office where there was the story about President Abraham Lincoln overcoming difficulties that I had actually read at a Wings for LIFE meeting in Feb. We then visited his home where he had raised 12 children (we think it was that many).

On Thursday we did a party at Glory Ministry shanty town school, and then went to the huge Bible College graduation, parade through town, and Wings Ministry training. We were very touched that not only the graduates got a certificate, but they presented very meaningful certificates to us as well for life experience in mission work.

## **Friday:**

We were supposed to visit the prison in Bungoma but because of difficulties we changed our plans. Instead we made a total of 9 stops. We visited 7 schools/orphanages, most of which were deep in the interior where white people had never visited. We constantly heard children delighted calling, "mzungu, how are you?" We waved back and called out "Jambo" – hello!

We were deeply honored for each of us to be asked to pray specifically for a particular school. Since there were only 5 of us, we laughed and assigned the 6<sup>th</sup> school to Peter, our interpreter, and the 7<sup>th</sup> school to James, our driver. At each of our stops we tried to demonstrate different parts of the Wings Ministry. Games: Tarps, balloons, relays, balls and adults always playing with the children. (We shared how they could use other things like towels instead of tarps, but tarps are prevalent in Kenya. We also talked about using soccer balls [which some schools had] or making balls out of banana leaves.)

Bible stories: Jesus in the Boat, The Sower, Noah and the Ark, and Jesus welcoming the little children at his feet.

We sang everywhere, at some places we made butterflies, and gave out stickers and candy to the children.

At the Riverside Academy, which now has been renamed St. Ann's Academy (in honor of me), we were first greeted by some of the children who led us across the large field. We quickly learned the tune and words and same along as we marched in line behind the children. We walked to the shaded area where the other children were.

At first the children sang for us and then did a rap about AIDS. Many of the children had lost their parents to AIDS. We did the story of the Sower, as there was a teacher who was on crutches, so he was "the rock". We demonstrated how we include everyone in Wings, especially those who are crippled or elderly.

When we arrived in Bungoma we visited the hospital. We were impressed by the layout, pharmacy, cleanliness, and the welcome from the staff and patients. They showed us the "Theatre", which is actually the operating room. We also saw the X-Ray area. I saw a room called St. Ann's room, asked for a photo to be taken, and soon a 3 day old baby was thrust in my arms and her mother was beaming. We left some medicines with them and they were so grateful.

Our last stop was Christ Alive Healing Word Church led by Pastor Lucas. Not only is he a powerful preacher, but a wonderful singer. The church praise band in white shirts and black skirts/slacks greeted us in joyous singing. We knew one of the songs and of course we sang and clapped along with all the songs. Some of the people had been there since 10 am and it was now after 7:00 pm. A police officer who was one of the top police officials was also a member of the church so we met him too.

After meeting all the dignitaries, pastors, and leaders in the congregation, I was able to greet everyone. We didn't do a Wings Party because of the long day, but I was able to thank the entire Wings Team for their amazing support, participation, and knowledge of Wings as we had been a Wings Team together all day. We shared gifts with Pastor Lucas to give to his congregational members and all the orphanages and schools he ministers to.

Before the closing prayer, Bishop Michael gave us all huge compliments. An American mission team of a few pastors had apparently visited a few years ago. He said the first day they visited two places and they were fine, but the next day he said that they "needed to be carried back to their hotel" and they left their mission work and flew home early because they were so tired.

Instead, his compliment to us was that he was surprised (pleasantly I think) to see 5 American women who went all day without lunch, visited the 9 sites with them, and continued to smile and be gracious to everyone we met.

I was so VERY proud of the team! They are really amazing women. When I thanked them in front of the church I got tears in my eyes, for they had truly exhibited the love of Christ to everyone we met. They were genuine in their love and compassion, and everyone knew it all day long!

I'm proud of our Kenya Wings Mission Team, and I'm also so proud of all our new Kenyan Wings Ministry Team Members! Bishop Michael is already talking about bringing Wings to Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa! He is praying that in a few years that Wings will be in at least 15 African countries.

God has introduced us to powerful men and women of God. With the new Kenyan Wings Team Members that we have now met, I think Bishop Michael may be right!