

**01-29-13**

## **Report from 01-28-13 Visit to Kisii Men's & Women's Prison and Wings Training**



We drove 2.5 hours along an inland road around Lake Victoria to Kisii. We climbed in altitude and were in beautiful rolling highlands with fields of all kinds of crops. The fields are terraced and it seems like people have found ways to plant crops and fruit trees on every inch of land. It is absolutely gorgeous. We could tell we were in a more rural area and James, our driver, is now on roads he has never traveled in his 68 years.

We met at the Nakumatt (Kenyan version of Wal-Mart) and went directly to the prison. Pastor Philip, one of my original contacts in Kenya for over 6 years, and Pastor Paul, from the Emmaus Bible College, arranged for our visit.

Chaplain David took us into the welfare office where we explained Wings and registered to enter the prison.

Walked through the small door in the very large metal gate, and were pleased to see hundreds of men sitting in a covered courtyard. The metal roof was 3/4s complete, and when it lightly sprinkled, all the men quickly packed into the covered area.

As we have experienced in past prison visits, the Chaplain welcomed us, did a few introductions, and then an inmate led inmate praise singing. They sang two songs for us that the men sang enthusiastically.

We also had some team members from the Bible College, so they helped us when we started leading songs. We dramatized Jesus calming the storm, and inmates were some of the disciples and Pastor Philip was Jesus. Everyone always laughs and loves when they hear Jesus "snoring".

There were additional men in a secured area in the back of the prison. Apparently they heard us and wanted to join us and soon a hundred or more additional men came into the courtyard. I'm not sure if all 1100 inmates were in the courtyard, but with the rented sound system I am sure they all heard us.

After our program, we were invited to meet with the duty officer. He warmly welcomed us, showed us his copy of "Chicken Soup for the Prisoner's Soul." I had written a story in one of the books but after we looked it was that one. I did show him a copy of my book Family Arrested, and he asked if he could have it. Since it was my only copy I told him that if he emailed me I'd send him an electronic copy of the audio version of my book and he seemed very happy.

He asked if we were going to visit the women's prison. We said we didn't have permission so he immediately got on the phone and called the female prison duty officer. We were surprised when he

said she should let us in because we were friends of his. Because of his endorsement, we were allowed to immediately walk across the parking lot of the prison to the entrance of the women's prison.

We were so pleased when we entered into prison and saw two scripture passages printed on a large 6 x 12 foot wall. The passages were 2 Corinthians 7:2-3 and Colossians 2:2-3. The yard was beautifully landscaped and topiary designs had letter for the ADMiNISTRATION, greenery in flowered designs, signs in greenery that said WELCOME, and beautiful flowers around the gardens.

We walked across red brick pavers which made a sidewalk in the prison. It was very colorful with the green grass where the ladies and their young children were in the courtyard. It was interesting that they had badminton net in the courtyard as well, so we sang around the net.

The ladies were in their traditional black and white vertical stripes uniforms. A few women were in a solid tan colored uniform, and those women were not yet convicted. Others had red letters –indicating a different level of charges.

We sang with them, and they wanted to sing Praise Ye the Lord twice! They loved it. We did Noah and the Ark, and it was a miracle that we had time to finish it just before the skies opened up and we were in an actual tropical downpour. Everyone ran for cover and we were led to a room that they used for Chapel on Thursdays and also on Sundays for 1 hour each day. The ladies also did "Prison Industries" there, which included crocheting, embroidery, and if they complete the course taught in the prison, when they leave they are given their own sewing machine.

This was the first rain we have experienced and we're so thankful we are not here in the rainy season. Most parties have been outside and we would have had to cut a lot of our ministry short if we had experienced more rain. Also, the potholes in the roads fill quickly and then you can't see how deep/dangerous they are, so we are very grateful to be here in the dry season.

While it poured we had a chance to talk to the male and female chaplains, and our new Wings team members. Once it stopped (at least 30 minutes later), we hurried to the van as we had 50-60 people waiting for us at the St. Vincent Conference Center.

This center is near the downtown area, which was actually very close to the prison, so we registered into the conference center, unloaded our bags, and while the team got the heavy bags up only two sets of stairs, I started the training.

We were able to rent the room for two hours so I didn't want to waste a minute. We went through the 4 parts of a Wings Party (singing, dramatizing scripture, arts & crafts, and talking while eating.) We didn't have anything to eat, but did get into small groups and had them discuss what they had learned in the training.

I was amazed that they had gotten so much out of our short training. I taught them how to divide the group and find partners to get to know by dividing with choices of "bananas" or "Mangos". We divided

again using choices of those who like to play soccer (football), those who like to watch soccer, those who like to cook, and those who like to sing. Again, we were demonstrating ways to get people to talk to one another. They enjoyed this and seemed to understand the importance of interacting and talking to one another.

We also went over some of the rules at a Wings Party:

1. We treated everyone as a Child of God.
2. Everyone participates.

We also discussed other “guidelines”:

1. Turn off all cell phones while at Wings Party. (Enjoy the moment and do not be distracted by outside calls.)
2. Honor the time. Start the program on time and close on schedule. We must honor everyone who has come. Schedule the program at times that are convenient for most people and start on time. Do “Mixer Games” prior to the official start of the party as a way to get to know one another and build more relationships with people.
3. ALWAYS follow all the rules at the prison. The Duty Officer determines the rules, whether we were told something different prior to the visit or not. We are the guests of the prison and must obey ALL rules.

We finished out Wings training in exactly two hours. We taught them how to always clean up the room and leave it as we found it (or even cleaner.) Then we walked outside and gathered in a lovely grassy courtyard, where we closed in prayer.

We are staying at St. Vincent’s Conference Center and so were thankful to not have to travel anywhere else. Although we ordered our dinner and they told us it would take about 40 minutes, it was actually about two hours before the food actually arrived. Cathy and Amy ordered the fish, and we laughed as Cathy had trouble eating the fish while it stared at her. She is debating about becoming a total vegetarian again 😊