

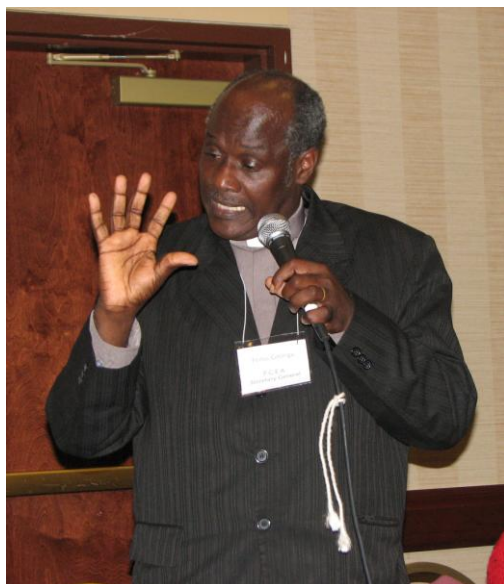
A Report from "the Front!" Kenya Mission Network Meeting
Cincinnati, OH ~ October 21-22, 2009



This picture, taken during the World Mission Celebration, includes several members of the Kenya Mission Network Council, and our guests from the PCEA, Secretary General Festus Gitonga, second row, third from left, and Mrs. Veronica Muchiri, fifth from the left. In the front row, second from right is our new Liaison for East Africa for the PCUSA, Mrs. Nancy Collins, who will be stationed in Zambia. Nancy's e-mail: collinsnj@gmail.com

The 7th meeting of the Kenya Mission Network was opened by Co-Moderator,

Carol McWilliams. Visitors, guests and friends were welcomed. Morning devotions were led by Rev. Cyprian Guchienda of Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas, TX. An agenda guided the meeting through discussion topics and presentations. Introductions of new partnerships were featured throughout the course of the 1-1/2 day meeting. New and established participants had opportunities to become acquainted through a group activity and small group discussions. Featured guests from Kenya were Rt. Rev. Festus Gitonga, Secretary General of the P.C.E.A and Mrs. Veronica Muchiri, P.C.E.A. Woman's Guild Organizer/Secretary. Special guests and visitors from the PC (USA) included Nancy Collins, newly appointed Liaison for East Africa (based in Zambia); Doug Welch, Africa Office; and Hunter Farrell, Director of World Missions. Validated Mission Organizations that participated were Medical Benevolence Foundation (Ms. Pam Ator) and The Outreach Foundation, Mr. Stu Ross. Mrs. Gayle Radnich, an infectious disease nurse who spent 12 years in hospital and NGO mission service in Kenya, was a guest presenter.



We gratefully acknowledge the many contributions from Kenya Mission Network members and friends which enabled us to bring Rev. Gitonga and Mrs. Muchiri to our meeting in Cincinnati!

Following opening remarks and announcements, Secretary General Gitonga addressed the Network by expressing appreciation for the partnerships in mission and the value of working together toward mutual goals and objectives. The newly installed PCEA leadership (April, '09) began work almost immediately on Strategic Planning with the following ten objectives.

- 1) Develop a five-year plan within the P.C.E.A. with input from Presbyteries and Partners in Kenya. A gathering in Kenya had been accomplished among Kenya Mission Partners. Three leaders were elected by those attending to coordinate partnerships in Kenya; Rev. Patrick Rukenya, Peter Kimweru, and Mary Maribei
- 2) Establishment of a Presbyterian Seminary for the purpose of equipping and training pastors in Reformed tradition – in very early stage of discussion.
- 3) Environmental Stewardship - concerns for accessible water, retention of forests, and reclaiming land.
- 4) Agriculture and Food Security – challenges of supply and storage in regions of drought
- 5) Mission Strategy – more effective strategies of reaching areas that lack a minister or evangelist (53 Nendeni areas have been identified)
- 6) New strategies for finance and investments – using resources effectively (comparable to the business world)
- 7) Information technology and communication – effective application of technology, particularly considering the nature of reaching rural areas.
- 8) HIV-AIDS & Substance Abuse – change tactics - training and education - support communities through the Church
- 9) Presbyterian University of East Africa – received interim letter of accreditation – academic expansion with new responsibilities (moving to include School of Health Sciences as well as Theological Faculty, etc.)
- 10) PCEA sponsored schools – reclaim religious teaching in their curriculum.

Rev. Gitonga also responded to questions of general interest which included IDP resettlement, access to education, dispensaries, and homes for elderly. He is an articulate presenter and his message was enthusiastically received.

A presentation by Mrs. Veronica Muchiri, PCEA Woman's Guild Organizer/Secretary followed Rev. Gitonga's introduction. Mrs. Muchiri's remarks were prefaced with acknowledgment of the resilience of the women of Kenya and their daily struggle to feed their families (food, water, firewood) and educate children. Guiding principles of the Woman's Guild are Worship/Bible study, Fellowship, and Service. The Woman's Guild started in 1922 and is over 100,000 strong. Key points of her presentation included:

1. Development of a Woman's Guild Strategic Plan – the first draft is being reviewed at local levels with the hope for adoption in April, 2010.
2. Building the capacity of women leaders - a Women's Leadership Institute – potential for partnership opportunities
3. Food Security, including concerns for fuel and clean water
4. Environmental conservation and preservation
5. Mentoring young women – one-on-one relationships (as in Ruth-Naomi) training in responsible behavior
6. Economic Empowerment – property ownership, micro-finance, fair trade
7. Women and Health – HIV & AIDS testing & stigma reduction, maternal mortality, fistula treatment, cancer screening
8. Emergency Response – post election violence, teaching people how to feed families consistently
9. Peace Initiative – in families, in communities (proactive toward 2012 elections)
10. Protection from abuse – victims of violence, shelters, family shelters
11. Laws and legal issues related to property of widows



Veronica's closing remarks asked:
"What can we do together; what can
we rethink?"

Other presentations were requested to demonstrate our mutuality in mission and included:

- Health and Medical Care - a presentation by Infectious Disease Nurse, Mrs. Gayle Radnich. Gayle shared details of her experience in the development of a medical clinic for Beacon of Hope, and NGO in Ongata Rongai. Gayle also touched on experiences with dispensaries planted in rural areas for World Concern. E-mail: gradnich@gmail.com
- History of the Kikuyu Dental Clinic - presented by Sharon Secor – covered a 10 year time-line of a Dental Clinic partnership project at the Kikuyu Hospital (Northern Plains). Several people requested that Sharon provide her presentation in booklet form as a Model/guide for partnership development.
- Cooperative introduction of the Presbyterian University of East Africa by a team of representatives including First Pres-Atlanta, Trinity-Atlanta, Third Presbyterian-Rochester, NY and PCEA Liaison, George Gitahi. A separate time was announced to obtain further detail about status and needs of the University.

PC (USA) leadership was welcomed and provided brief remarks. Doug Welch addressed shifts in personnel and programming. A search is in progress for an Area Coordinator for the Africa Office. Doug is moving into the role of Associate Director, Mission Partners and Programs. For the time being he will cover both positions. We were reminded that where 5 partnership countries existed in Africa in the past, there are now 20. The programming piece includes a core team devoted to strategic planning to develop a mission statement, a vision statement and the plan that sets them in motion. Rev. Hunter Farrell, Director of World Missions was introduced and touched on the intricacies of partnership including language, culture, and work vs. labor. He challenged us to think "sustainability together."

The final activity for the Kenya Mission Network gathering was a panel discussion moderated by Glen Hallead, former PC (USA) Mission Co-Worker. Panelists were Rev. Gitonga, Stu Ross, Veronica Muchiri, Pam Ator, Gayle Radnich, Sharon Secor, and Doug Welch. Random questions were presented to the panelists on multiple topics including transparency, famine response, history of partnerships, identifying partners for relationships, etc. Questions were challenging and responsive interchange was helpful to everyone.



From left: Carol McWilliams, Moderator; Tom Cramer, Past Moderator; Rev. Gitonga, and Mrs. Muchiri.

In conclusion, recurring topics of interest are summarized from small group discussions and general questions:

- “Best Practices” of our partnerships: patience, respect for Kenyan ideas, sense of time and timing, listening, clarifying understandings (not taking things for granted, avoiding misunderstandings or imposition of solutions)
- Memoranda of Understanding - beginnings, evaluations, goals, endings, mutually developed, planning for sustainability
- Mutual accountability and transparency, attempt to maintain ongoing two-way communication, being mindful of keeping PCUSA, PCEA, and Regional Liaison in the loop
- Cultural differences and expectations. Seek in-person meetings as much as possible, important for clarity and continuity, (take into account technology challenges tied to consistent power supply). We were reminded of the cost of hospitality by hosts in Kenya - food costs, shortage of space, etc. Suggestion was made to make provision for “hospitality” funds in the cost of our travel to reimburse Kenyan hosts for hospitality expense, sending resources in advance of the visit.
- A small group fundraising discussion produced several different models for funding short term missions and suggestions for raising resources for mission journeys.
- US Visas for Kenya partners. Our Embassy sees its role as protecting America from threat, whether terror or economic (people not returning to Kenya, needing welfare or other social services). Visa applicants must have a clear and compelling case demonstrating their stability, income, land ownership, family ties in Kenya, (i.e., reasons for returning). Visa interview time is extremely limited and applicants must be able to articulate their case quickly and confidently. Any person denied a visa will have very little chance of being approved at a second interview. A youthful applicant, nervous behavior, unsure self-presentation, or contradictory answers will almost always be triggers for visa denial. Applicants should seek help in preparation for their visa interview from Kenyans who have successfully managed the process. A suggestion to mentor a visa applicant via a “role play” of the Embassy interview was offered.
- Medical mission projects drew additional interaction. Gayle Radnich (Beacon of Hope) shared several new resources and contacts, including the suggestion that medicines be purchased in Kenya through MEDS (a medical supply program in Kenya) and not carried from the US.

- Two key phrases emerged from our discussions and presentations:
 - Going deeper - when a partnership is maturing look for ways to go deeper, new ways to partner
 - “Partnerships are not the people! The people change, but the partnership continues. The Memorandum of Understanding is the backbone of a good partnership.”
- Throughout the gathering, a photo slide show offered visual evidence of the work at clinics, schools, orphanages, church construction, water projects and visits with Kenyan hosts and friends. A book table was offered as a way to share literature and good reading material about travel, culture and interaction in Kenya.

Many of the KMN group staying for the World Mission Celebration and continued their conversations during the plenary sessions, workshops and at meals in the Duke Energy Convention Center.

Photo: pictured here are several members of the KMN, and Secretary General Gitonga, Mrs. Muchiri in the middle. Front row, second from the right Nancy Collins, new Liaison for East Africa.

The Council looks forward to increased communication between the members and among our partners. Share your stories and experiences, your “Best” and “Worst” practices! Tell us about your plans and experiences in partnership!

The Kenya Mission Network Council currently includes: Carol McWilliams, Moderator; Sharon Secor, Vice-Moderator; Don McCord, Secretary; Treasurer, tba, and members Rod Frohman, Henri Rush, Tom Cramer (past Moderator), Leah Horton, Rose Emily Bermudez, Marilyn Hedgpeth, George Gitahi and Glen Hallead (initiator of the Kenya Mission Network on the Mission Crossroads).

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This is the new symbol for the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Authorization has been received from the PCEA to use their symbol in our communications and publications.

PCEA Web Site: <http://www.pceaheadoffice.or.ke/>