

The African Reporter



DUNKARD BRETHREN CHURCH

P.O. Box 658
Kapenguria, Kenya 30600
East Africa

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Spring Quarterly Report

Late Night Thoughts on Confession

As I ponder over what it means to be a missionary



If you visit a church here in Kenya, you may notice that, upon entering the church and finding a seat, some people will appear to silently pray before joining the service. I found out recently that they were confessing their sins to Jesus.

Often, we associate “confession” with the Catholic practice of confessing one’s sins before a priest, which we automatically recoil from because, goodness, the priest has no business knowing my sins and besides, Jesus is my priest! I want none of this “Hail Mary” business, no sir. However, I wonder sometimes if, in our rejection of confessing before a priest, we totally throw out the entire idea of recurrent confession.

Declaring “I’m a sinner!” is different from

saying, “I allowed my pride to stir up my anger. I should not have treated that person with so much contempt—I am a sinner.”

While the first statement is a broad acknowledgement of our sinful nature, the second draws our attention to how truly fallen we are, makes us more aware of how much we painfully need Christ, and it also serves a healthy dose of humility.

As missionaries and as Christians, this humility is so necessary because our lives revolve around serving people, and people are messy. Even coming from the state of California, with its large population of homeless people, weed addicts, and angry drivers, I didn’t realize how much of a fuzzy bubble I lived in until I came here. We very quickly became acquainted with people whose lives scream of an absence of Christ.

There was a young mama who began coming over to our place about once a week to help me clean the house, and she would bring her 7-month-old baby. The last time she came over with

her baby, I ended up holding him most of the time. I felt so much sorrow for him, and such a heavy burden to pray for him. I noticed how, whenever I or Micaiah showed this baby some love, he seemed to cling to the affection like a man clinging to the edge of a cliff for dear life. I felt like something bad was about to happen, and I hated the feeling of being so powerless. I had to trust that God would take care of this sweet, innocent little baby.

A few days later, events between the father and mother of the baby came to literal blows. The mother ended up leaving with the baby and finding shelter with her in-laws. I felt so much anger and contempt for this woman-beater, especially as we continued to learn of the different types of abuse he had subjected his family to. How do you love someone who has completely traumatized both his wife and his child? How do you pray for someone who deprives his child of a father? Can I truly believe that Christ died even for this piece of human scum?

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If you have questions that you would like us to answer in future reports, contact us using the information above.



Our little family



A weaver bird hard at work.

The African Reporter



Knightly with Baby Dean.

Continued...

But when I kneel before Christ and specifically recognize, confess, and repent of all those sins I myself have committed, I find the royal Christian throne I've plopped myself upon start to crumble further and further, until I find myself looking at these other sinners straight in the eye. I may not have physically beat someone, but I have beat people down with my words, and with gossip. I may not have

gone out and gotten drunk, but I have engaged in unhealthy habits that have indirectly harmed those close to me.

Suddenly, I find myself on the same plane as my fellow "pieces of human scum," and in a better spot to extend grace towards them as Christ has extended grace towards me. Upon recognizing my own faults, I am better equipped to meet

people where they are in their messy, dirty lives, and share Christ's love with them. I feel more willing to try and see the heart of people, and to recognize the potential they have through Jesus when I recognize how much He has forgiven me.

-Bethany Johnson

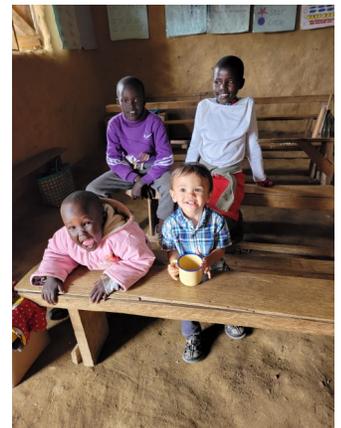
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Something We've Learned:

Micaiah: So often in my attempt to preach a meaningful and penetrating sermon, I leave behind the plain preaching of the Word. I have realized that I do not need to embellish God's Word. He has done a sufficiently good job Himself. I simply am called to preach what he has given us. His Word is sufficient.

Bethany: If you go to most clinics here to give birth, you will most-likely have to labor in the same room as other women before delivering. It does not sound relaxing at all.

Knightly (1.5 yrs): Every bug is a bee. Bees are so cool. If I see an actual bee, I will bring up this momentous occasion for many days to come.



Taking chai after church.



Working on the solar panels

Mission Compound Update:

Sam Odongo and Collins Musumba have been an immense help in fixing issues with the electricity and well. For a while, there were ditches running all over the mission compound, waiting for pipes to be installed.

The new well needed its pump replaced and the system was updated so

that we are no longer relying on "the grid" to pump water, and are instead using solar.

It seems that every time someone comes over here to Kenya, they spend a great deal of time on fixing issues with the well and electricity. The problem is that most people who come here

come to be missionaries, not to be electricians and plumbers. We hope that this work that has been happening will provide long-term benefits to us and future missionaries as well, as long as there is proper upkeep.

Church Updates:

- **Kamoi:** Since their pastor, Absalom, recently passed away, Micaiah has been acting as temporary pastor until someone is installed. He has been encouraging the young men to lead the weekly Bible Studies and do openings for the church services. Until a pastor is installed, we will be visiting this church every other Sunday.



- **Chesubet:** This congregation is meeting with the Kamoi congregation until they can find a new church building. Forgiveness has been an especially hot topic at the Bible Studies, as members are still hurting from the treatment of a former pastor.

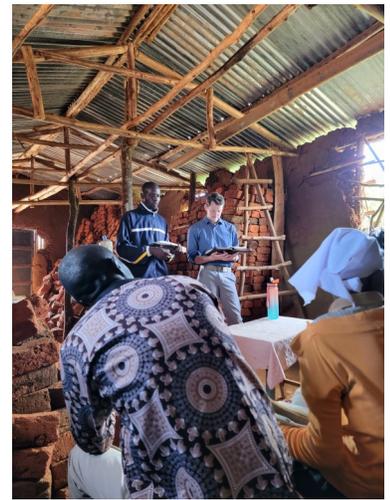
- **Kapkisei:** This church is the furthest from the mission compound (about a 3 hour drive, one-way). They are a healthy, flourishing church, with a huge heart to give. When we were visiting, they were discussing building a new house for a woman and her family who have been living in a straw hut that leaks profusely when it rains

(which happens quite frequently in that area).

- **Ortum:** This church is the furthest in Pokot territory, and they are in need of an interpreter who can translate Swahili to Pokot, and vice-versa.
- **Makutano:** This congregation has continued to shrink, and it feels a bit disheartening every time we visit. However, several young men are starting to step up and step into leadership roles to try and revive this dying church. Already, there has been a lot of hopeful signs as aforementioned young men encourage this congregation to start ministering to those around them.

- **Chepkorniswo:**

This church cannot stop singing, there is so much joy in their worship! The building is mainly packed with children, and it is a pleasure to hear so many young voices lifted together in praise.



- **Soy:** Their current church building is filled to the brim with bricks with which to make a new church building. This is a very generous congregation, and we were invited to Benson's house for lunch. Upon feeding us, they also fed the neighborhood children who had gathered outside the house to catch a glimpse of us wazungu (white people).



- **Potential Churches:** There are two locations where two more churches may possibly start up. Please pray that God will prepare the hearts of the people there and that He will move people to host such gatherings.



Advice for the Newcomer: Be Flexible

Just this recent evening, as I was rolling ideas of what to write for this report around in my head, we drove about an hour in the late afternoon to visit a young family. It was such a pleasure to see them and their home, and they served a lovely meal of rice, ndegu, potatoes, and chai. Towards the end of the evening, we started making the usual comments that set up for eventual departure (“We’re feeling pretty tired now; I think Knightly needs to go to sleep soon; My feet are swelling up (ah, the life of a pregnant woman), I think I need to put them up”).

But then our hosts kept making comments about how there was a bed set up if we wanted to lie down, and that they had been hoping we’d stay late so then we’d

have to stay the night. Both Micaiah and I were not sure if they were just making jokes or if they really had a bed prepared for us. Eventually, we prayed with them as one does before departure, and then we followed the wife out of the house... and to the room they had prepared for us.

I had not prepared for an overnight stay at all—no extra clothes, toothbrushes, nothing. At least Knightly had extra diapers and an extra outfit! But hospitality is a huge part of the Kenyan culture, and when it is extended, we must partake. The night felt a bit rough, but in the morning we were able to take chai with the family, and we felt so grateful to have friends who were around our own age, who were such a blessing to us.



So while I’m planning to pack an overnight bag to leave in our vehicle for those times of “just in case,” (our hosts probably found our morning breath an insult to their humanity), we are so glad that we did not allow our desire for a concrete plan to mess up an opportunity to be blessed by our friends.

