



## Report from the Field, 2018 - Bob and LuAnn Herring

***“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?” Matt. 16:26***

Gilbert’s mom had never heard about the woman at the well. Like that woman, her life was broken by failed marriages, she had resorted to a relationship considered immoral, and was branded an outcast by religious law and society. Gilbert guided us to his new home in a notoriously wretched place, and his mom was home. I’d never met her before, as in every previous visit, she was working in the local bar. Gilbert and his brothers had run the house together, and they were tight. Now the mom had moved in with a new man, and Gilbert’s brothers had been taken away by their father to live with him. Gilbert, thin and quiet, was obviously devastated. When Ruth, our social worker, asked the young mom about the man, she replied flippantly, “He’s just a friend, he’s not my husband.” Gilbert was sent outside, and my Kenyan team members’ good attempts at moral counseling weren’t getting through.

I quietly said to her, “I know who wants to be your husband.” Now she was listening. She heard about the woman in John 4, her failures and rejection, and her surprise meeting with a man Who, though He knew everything she ever did, did not reject or condemn her. In fact, He revealed Himself as the Messiah, the One who wanted to wipe away all the shame and share His life with her, to be her Husband. Gilbert’s mom visibly softened; she wanted to know this One Who truly loved her. I’ll never forget the change in her that day, as she encountered Jesus, the only One Who could truly mend her broken life, and would never, ever, leave her.



Outside, Bob was sharing about that same Savior to a crowd that had gathered. Men, women, and children responded enthusiastically, and as we finally climbed back into the taxi, people literally begged us, crying, “Please bring a church here! We want to change!”

Similar scenes were repeated as our team travelled through the slums that day sharing this good news: real hunger, and such grateful, loving response, from the overlooked and outcast of all ages. It was dark as we headed home, exhausted but deeply joyful. Bob and I were quiet, both overwhelmed by God’s love and determined commitment to reach these people, in this place so forsaken by man, but never by Him.

We can’t start a church in Falkland, and we can’t fix Gilbert’s family; but we can share the message of the One who came to fix broken hearts and lives, and has the power to do it. That’s what Kenya Trip 2018 was all about, a renewal of the preaching of the gospel and discipleship as AC’s primary focus. We will continue to give practical help because of Christ’s love, but it is true spiritual change in hearts, minds, and motives that bears lasting fruit. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the ultimate Empowerment Program, it is the one venture that is truly sustainable when cultures, governments, and funding resources change. If not at the forefront, programs to promote medical, educational and economic betterment have limited impact, and can even enable people to remain in their unhealthy mindsets despite outward change. The grace of God empowers true change.

How excited we were to find that our partnering church, under Pastors Peter Siakama and Apollo Juma, was already moving in the same direction! Together, we faced the prospect of changes in ourselves and all of our “old wineskins”, in order to allow God’s “new wine” to flow as He would desire. The effect was more clarity, unity, and opportunities for outreach than we have ever experienced in our 14 years of working together.

In the following pages, we will attempt to show what that change looks like, so far, in each program that Africa Connect - through donors and prayer partners like you - supports in Kenya. Thank you for your part in it all!

## Graceway Harvest Chapel & Gospel Light Centre

Graceway Harvest Chapel, our Kenyan home church, was blessed with the return of Pastor Peter Siakama and his family from the US late in 2017. As overseer of Gospel Light Ministries, the non-profit umbrella for Graceway and its 30-plus churches, Peter preached powerfully, bringing a renewed passion for relational outreach to the community, and a challenge to set aside accepted traditional and cultural concepts of ministry if they inhibited simple obedience to the teachings of Jesus. This picture was taken during the March 11 service, in which the entire church went forward to personally answer the call to go into their local fields. They are indeed white and ready for harvest!



- ✚ Church construction and other programs were suspended in order to prioritize training church members to conduct cell groups in their homes. Rather than waiting for people to come to church, they are taking the church to the needy in their own neighborhoods, providing spiritual community to better understand people's needs and help them to grow in their faith. These cell groups are beginning even now with prayer.
- ✚ The Cell groups will intentionally reach out to families of our preschool and IMS sponsored students, working with the social workers to locate them and help assess their needs, and to offer a place of refuge and spiritual growth. It will also provide a model for a healthy Bible centered family.
- ✚ Pastor Apollo Juma is faithfully teaching the Word on radio every Saturday morning, resulting not only in new members in the Kitale church, but many invitations to teach conferences and plant new churches throughout Kenya and even into Uganda. We are so grateful for this amazing ministry.

## Outreach & Discipleship Ministry



As heavy, unseasonal rains descended in early March, we felt a bit trapped, unable to visit in the slums. We decided to seek out places to preach indoors, and suddenly invitations came to speak in government high

schools, factories, and lunch hour meetings in town. We joined Peter Ndiema on Mt. Elgon, who leads a fantastic team ministering to 500 high schools in that war ravaged area. Many of these students are traumatized, and live under incredible pressure to conform and to excel, often knowing God only through songs and repetitive motivational speeches to "work harder!" As we shared the love of the Father and the power of Grace to transform, hundreds of students in several schools seriously responded. We left with many doors still open, in the slum areas of Kitale as well as in rural schools and churches of Mt Elgon. We cannot wait to return and go through those doors!

Bob was particularly excited to host a vision meeting with pastors and overseeing Bishops from different churches. The atmosphere was charged with hopeful expectation as they discovered a kindred desire to allow God to lead in creative ways to reach the lost, and to complement one another's efforts to do so. Christ's Body is preparing to see God move to reach this generation in Kenya, and throughout the world.



# Graceway Victory Academy Preschool

We fell in love, again, with the new “baby class” of preschoolers, and got to watch them quickly respond to receiving two meals a day, medical care, vitamins, and loving nurture from the GVA teachers and staff. On Uniform Day we were privileged to help wash down all three classes (90 students!) and give them their new uniforms, shoes, backpacks and undies, not a small thing for these children who arrived with absolutely nothing.



We met often with the administrative team, and treasured our weekly “Staff Chai” discussions with the teachers and other staff. We talked over the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and together determined to, even more, prioritize parental responsibility and discipleship within the home in order to see more long term, sustainable fruit. Rather than be perceived as a rescue center for the kids only, the shared vision is to provide a godly community where families can develop spiritual, emotional and economic stability, with the parents and guardians taking personal responsibility for themselves and their children. We seek comprehensive Community Transformation through Christ, not a culture of welfare dependency.



To that end, these changes were made:

- ✚ Intake will begin in August for the school year starting in January, giving more time to assess the true need and sincere intentions of the applicants through more thorough vetting and repeated visits to the home;
- ✚ Reducing the student enrollment from 90 to 75 over the next two years, to use our financial and human resources more efficiently in meeting the educational, spiritual and physical need of the families.
- ✚ Further reducing the staff’s burden through wage increases, new contracts and better delegation of duties;
- ✚ Hiring Ruth Wanyonyi, head cook, as part time social worker to assist Wyckliffe in his many responsibilities;
- ✚ Stricter enforcement of policy requiring participation in Empowerment and Discipleship programs.

The local County and Municipal governments now require that all schools (including church-run) be registered, meaning higher standards and stricter enforcement in all areas. About \$2000 was spent on flush toilets and separating walls, upgrades to the water system and kitchen, and improvements to the exterior classrooms. We are still waiting on the registration inspectors (this is Africa!), but the improvements were positive and helpful.



## Empowerment Programs/Tailoring

This program has been particularly fruitful, thanks to the passion and diligence of overseer Rose Juma and instructors Lillian and Susan. Despite the difficulties they face working with the very poor and often illiterate, they convinced us to expand the program to reach more women in Tuwani. With unemployment around 80%, often young girls finish school but cannot get jobs, and the slum is a dangerous place to be alone or idle. We prioritized weekly devotions in each class, and many students have received Christ and are now attending church and/or cell groups.



- ✚ Counseling is also now being offered to Tailoring students, often struggling single moms and widows.
- ✚ Thanks to gracious donations, we now have 3 Embroidery machines, 12 standard machines, and another cutting table, iron, scissors and materials.
- ✚ Two Embroidery classes were added on Saturdays. This skill takes less time to learn than dressmaking, and is highly marketable in the area. Currently there are 8 students, many of them tailoring program graduates.
- ✚ Literacy classes will now be offered to all, making it easier for students to learn, and to do life.

# Medical Missions

***“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Jn. 8:32***

***“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Jn. 17:17***

The primary focus of Africa Connect is *not* medical or healthcare delivery; indeed, it is to evangelize and disciple in those areas of the world where God calls us. For the past few years, God has been strongly convicting us that it is *not* social, educational, nor empowerment programs, not even medicine and clinics, that draw people to God; it is the preaching and the teaching of the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that effects change that is truly significant and lasting. *Truly, the Gospel is enough.*



Sue conducts a medical orientation session at Graceway, training volunteers and rural pastors in preventive health care, and sharing the vision for medical evangelism in their communities.

The administration of practical programs to alleviate suffering and bring dignity to individuals and communities is the external evidence of genuine faith. It is God’s compassion in action. Moving forward in the health and medical endeavors of Africa Connect, we are striving to identify and establish initiatives that will support our core mission and values – evangelism and discipleship first - and will demonstrate real benefit to the local community, with a goal of sustainability. We are collaborating with local medical personnel, and the pastors and churches, toward that same end. Pastors are now encouraged to travel to Kitale to attend an orientation session, to learn how their church can prepare to minister to their community through year-round medical outreach. The emphasis is to train church members in basic preventive health care and simple wound and emergency medical care.



One such example is our “jigger ministry.” Jiggers are a scourge in rural communities where people still live in houses with dirt floors. Jiggers are sand fleas that live in dry areas. They burrow into the skin and can cause debilitating infestation and life-threatening infection in people. There are many simple measures that can be instituted to eliminate this problem. At the Mali Saba clinic, 12 junior and senior high kids accepted the challenge to get their hands dirty and received hands-on instruction in physical removal of jiggers. They will keep the initiative rolling throughout the year, as their mentor will be connecting with them through social media to support and encourage their efforts. Educational resources were provided beforehand, as well as simple evangelistic tools - while a person is being treated with a 15-minute foot soak, there is ample opportunity to listen to a simple Gospel presentation!

Going forward, we see the medical clinics taking a deliberate “back seat” to the evangelistic outreaches; no less significant, no less effective; hopefully, the impact will be even greater, making better use of available resources in light of targeted needs in a specific community. In the past, “free” medical clinics have drawn hundreds, many truly *not* in need of medical care or medicine, which serves to detract precious time and resources from those truly in need. At an evangelistic outreach activity, we will be quietly present with a medical team, seeking out and drawing in the sick; ready to serve.

***“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” Matt. 9:35***

## Priorities matter!

Sue Choquette,  
AC Director of Medical and Health Initiatives

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