



Partnering with the African Community to facilitate transformation



APRIL 2025
TRIP REPORT

"For this is not for the relief of others and for your hardship, but by way of equality at this present time your abundance will serve as assistance for their need, so that their abundance also may serve as assistance for your need, so that there may be equality;" 2 Cor 8:13,14

REAPING THE JOYOUS REWARDS OF CROSS-CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP



What an encouraging time we had in Kenya!

It is very difficult (and takes 5 pages!) to adequately convey what God did during this most recent 5 ½ week trip; perhaps the faces of our preschool "newbies" encapsulate it. Receiving their new uniforms, bags and shoes represents to them new hope of things we may take for granted: getting to eat and learn every day, feeling secure and loved, and a sense of dignity.

How is this possible, involving a team made up of two very different cultures? Only an individual and team commitment to a shared vision, a vision that is God-given and Spirit empowered. It requires mutual submission, understanding and trust, patient communication and hard work; this can take years to develop. It also requires recognizing what each cultural team has to give, and what each one needs from the other. We



have learned such priceless lessons from our Kenyan friends, and given what we have in return. Africa Connect is now going into its 20th year, and we are seeing the fruits of "hanging in there" through many highs and lows, disappointments and yes, mistakes. Often times it takes many years to see the fruits of our labors, and the mysterious ways God's hand is working behind the scenes. We believe those fruits will long outlive us, because the vision is bigger than us. It is all about reproduction.

Connect Chapel: Discipleship, Growth, and Outreach

The growth of the Connect membership is impressive, but not merely in numbers; men and women are being raised up in leadership in their fields, mentored in the Word and wisdom. Most of our students' parents are now attending, because they feel loved and encouraged. Pastor Apollo Juma shares the pulpit with other leaders in the church, and stresses that all members are part of the vital team that makes the vision work. In one struggling single mama's home, we heard that she saves her shillings every week in hopes to buy the Sunday School children cups. They are taking ownership.

Nine cell groups have been established in different areas to encourage strong community. On visits, we heard stories of them helping each other with encouragement, spiritual counsel, and financially. One very poor mama in a small mud house with little furniture was hosting a cell group; she was offering, shamelessly, what she had to Jesus. Many of these cell groups are potential church plants. We spoke to Apollo recently regarding the church leaders' vision for outreach. He said "This year we are prioritizing visiting the parents of our kids in the slums and ministering to them." We literally cried. Our long-standing vision for the preschool was not only to care for the children, but to provide the local church a gateway to the homes to reach the families. Finally, the church is taking up this mantle!

Another long-time vision is to have a Bible School with a strong emphasis on outreach; we want to train missionaries to go into all the world. Connect Bible School officially begins this weekend! Praise God!

3rd Anniversary Celebration! On March 2, Connect Chapel invited friends and neighbors to celebrate three years since planting of the Church and Connect Premiere Preschool. At the time, it was the Juma family and a few others, with a simple tin and wood preschool. This day, the chapel was packed with overflow under tents totaling nearly 500. The church raised funds to feed all of them, and fed them well. They sang, danced, preached and ate, celebrating God's faithfulness for hours; the joy was indescribable.



Rael: During the service Apollo asked Bob and I to share a brief history of Africa Connect; often the story of one life can best demonstrate the vision and its fulfillment. We told the story of Rael, a tailoring graduate who last year was awarded a sewing machine and table for passing the National Exam. This year, on our last day of home visits, Rael joined our social worker to accompany our entire team to Falklands, the dark center of alcohol brewing for the whole county. We remembered our last visit to that area in 2017, when a crowd gathered to hear the gospel, and sent us off in our taxi literally crying, "Please, send us a church!". Following years of prayer, we found ourselves being guided by Rael through Falklands to visit our kids' homes. She was peaceful and confident passing through dangerous areas; she was obviously respected in the community. As we sat on nice furniture in her small but neat mud home, she told us her story. She grew up in Tuwani slum, and married a man who became an abusive addict. When he left her with their two kids, the mother-in-law kicked her out, leaving her destitute and homeless. She found a place in Falkland and went to work, learning how to make soap and doing casual labor. She graduated from the Connect tailoring program, began repairing clothes, and learned to repair sewing machines as well. She was soon able to buy a bicycle, and began selling her soap not only to Connect, but at local colleges. Her husband, seeing the stability of her life, came back, got sober, got a job, and is attending church.



As we marveled at her faith, courage, and relentless drive to better her own and her children's lives, she looked at us and said, "you don't remember me, but when I was 10, I was there when you were washing the children's feet." That 2007 scene was the launch, spiritually and physically, of our ministry to "serve the least of these", and our logo was taken from that scene. God was fulfilling the vision in this one woman's life behind the scenes, and now she has literally become part of the team. His ways are indeed marvelous!



PS: God did bring Falklands a church, and it is Connect Chapel; we did not realize, it is just across a field. Apollo has already established a cell group there, with Rael and Lorna, and has plans to do more!

New Developments:

Medical Partnership with The Cherangany Hospital

While in Kenya we reconnected with the family of our dear, recently deceased friend Dr. Jacob Kisang, who now manage Cherangany Hospital, which Jacob founded in 1994. Established and run on strong Christian principles, the hospital offers quality care and quickly expanding facilities. Discussions ensued

as to forming a partnership, in which Cherangany would facilitate medical care for our students and their parents, including: Periodic on-site student check-ups, Outpatient care, Emergency Interventions, Health instruction and Community clinics. This is replacing multi-tiered care from clinics, a local doctor, and a regional public hospital which provides seriously sub-standard care. This will greatly improve the quality of medical care our families receive, prevent more serious conditions, save our social workers a lot of time, and save Africa Connect money! Two of our parents are now using their dialysis machines twice weekly, and below are 3 stories of parents' lives which were saved through this hospital's intervention. It is now required for all parents to sign up for SHA, the Kenyan government's new health insurance plan, which is geared toward lower income families. This also forces families to get their pre-requisite birth certificates; we will assist some of the more desperate care-givers in this process. SHA will cover some procedures, some outpatient care, and often a percentage of the hospital bill.

Africa Connect is establishing a **Medical Fund** in Kenya, through which our team can have funds available as needed to fund not only our preschool and IMS student's medical care, but also emergency surgeries for children and parents. This will enable our team to immediately respond in emergencies, keep our balance with Cherangany paid and limit the number of crisis pleas to our donor community. Please consider helping to establish and maintain this Fund through a one time gift or monthly giving.

Emergency Food Bank

In similar fashion, Team Kenya and Team US have agreed to establish an Emergency Store, which will enable the staff to, discreetly and with wisdom, assist some families with food, soap, and clothes in times of need. This will replace our holiday month Food Distributions, which normally are distributed to all student families equally. These are very expensive, and could actually undermine our goals of encouraging a mindset of self-sustainability in those who are actually able to provide during these times. This, like the Medical Fund, should also decrease the crisis calls to our supporters for funding. To establish this, we hope to send funds to set up the Store this month, and then supplement with a monthly budgeted amount. *If God leads you to assist with this, it would be greatly appreciated!*

A decisive prompt for this was a social work report we read of "Brian", a preschooler who is HIV positive. He had been missing school as he was too weak to get out of bed; he was taking his meds on an empty stomach, making him ill. The food he needed was only found at school. The home is crowded, lacking sanitation, bedding, food and clothing. There is a desperate need for this home during this April holiday. With food from our farm, supplemented with maize and beans by AC, we can care for Brian.

Ian Memorial Sponsorship Program:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE! All of the particularly needy Grade 1 and 2 students have been sponsored, and those who lost sponsors have gained new ones! We now have 3 high schoolers that need a 2nd sponsor for this year. (Please contact ianmemorial@gmail.com for information). We now sponsor 60 in Primary, 14 in Jr. Secondary and 28 in High School, totaling 102 students! Gifts to the Ian Memorial General Fund are welcome.

High School Lunch at Karibuni Lodge –

All but 2 of our students (who attend schools at a distance) came to enjoy lunch, write to their sponsors, share stories and encouragement, enjoy kicking a soccer ball and bouncing around on the trampoline! What a great time! Unfortunately, 2 of our girls have dropped out of the program.

Our final meeting with some of our high school boys after the 3rd year celebration was unforgettable. They approached us to extend their thanks, pray for us, and say goodbye. Two of these young men are graduating seniors preparing for university; all of them had no future until they were sponsored. They have worked hard and maintained focus through much difficulty. We love them and are so incredibly proud of them!



Continuing Education: During the trip we were able to visit with Nevin and Shalom, now in university, and saw Susan often, singing with the worship team. Pray for them as they approach graduation.

Vincent, a young IMS high school graduate found us in Tuwani slum while we were conducting a home visit. At his urging, we followed him home to meet his mother, who was living in the middle of a neighborhood of alcohol brewers. Vincent has remained focused, sober and hopeful in the midst of a very oppressive atmosphere, demonstrating rare courage and faith. He was doing what he could, selling potatoes in the slum, but eager to find a career. After meetings with the staff, we agreed to fund an auto mechanics apprenticeship. On our final day at Connect he met us, all smiles; he loves the work and his boss, and the feeling is mutual. Yay!

Empowerment and Discipleship Programs:

The Empowerment programs continue to change lives in our families. One veteran AC team member (and visitor of homes) noted a big difference in the homes of our new preschool students, vs the situations of parents who have been in the program for a while. Results can sometimes be painfully slow, but they are real and lasting!

Tailoring: This year we have 18 students, and thanks to a recent donation, 18 machines! No longer do students have to share a machine. 2 electric machines were also purchased for the Production unit, which will greatly increase production and allow more graduates to participate. Still needed, an embroidery machine, \$1400.

Business Boost: A new business group is forming as parents become more serious about engaging together.

Hairdressing: 16 students have signed up for the new Hairdressing class.

Computer: We were able to purchase two more computers, as well as 15 tablets for our primary students! With computer training for the High School students and staff completed, this year's sessions will be devoted to our 14 Junior Secondary students during the April, August and November holidays.

Saved Lives! Three moms in the Connect program (and church) are alive today through your support:



Emma: A single mother of Simon, Emma had surgery in December to remove a life-threatening goiter on her neck. She had lost her husband and her income the month before. She beamed as she welcomed me to her home and handed me a thank you note.... *"Your generosity has not only helped me regain my health, but has also given me the strength and motivation to work hard and ensure I support my family and take good care of them. Your kindness has made a lasting impact on my life and I will always be grateful."* This is directed to those who responded to the need and gave.

Lorna: We met Lorna on Preschool uniform day, when she brought her son to enroll in Connect Preschool. The team saw a large wound on her ankle, and realized it was beyond first aid care; it had been there for 6 months and was now very large and creating a blood infection. She was admitted to Cherangany the next morning, and soon the wound was debrided. This past week she was discharged from her 2nd successful surgery, a skin graft. Through your donations, Africa Connect was able to provide her food, transportation, follow up care, and the cost of her first hospital stay. The balance remaining for her 2nd surgery and follow up care is **\$1300**.

Alice, or "Mama Maggie": Alice is a single mom, a parent in our Chronic Care program who consistently fights very high blood pressure. While in Tuwani on our last Saturday, Ben and Social worker Peter, "happened" to visit Alice and found her with a profuse nosebleed, which lasted a day and a half. As the partnership with Cherangany had not been finalized, she was taken to the public hospital, and Emelda, Connect social worker, registered her for SHA. The staff and team members donated blood for a transfusion. Her care was deplorable, the cause of her condition was never diagnosed and the transfusion never completed. Near death, we transferred her to Cherangany, where she received loving, professional care and was discharged within a week. Diagnosed with kidney failure, she will be on dialysis twice a week. Soon after she returned to Cherangany with a breathing issue, which was stabilized; she was discharged after 5 days, and is doing well. Thank you for your prayers and giving!

Farming, Husbandry, and Grounds:

Foundations for Farming instructor Emmanuel held teaching sessions in late February with the parents, and Lillian Armstrong got her hands dirty as well. They learned how to have a great harvest from a small plot of land. Lil was impressed with Emmanuel's teaching ability, the program's precision and its practical application of Biblical principles. We now have 200 chickens, and several ducks and turkeys.

To preserve space, the cow/poultry shed was built as a two-story structure with two pens. Two milk cows are coming soon, and an animal caretaker. The compound is now completely solar run, except during the heavy rains. We are currently clearing and planting grass in the new preschool and primary playgrounds and preparing them for lot of happy kids! The team brought soccer balls and games, but we will need playground equipment.



CONNECT PREMIERE PRIMARY AND JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL - COMING SOON!



The planning stage has begun for the construction of our own primary/Jr. Secondary school, which will serve Grades 1-9, and include Science lab, Home Science lab, Computer room, and Music Room. We currently have Grades 1-5 in a temporary building, but as we add Grade 6 next year we will be required to meet Ministry of Education standards in our building and curriculum. This is the first architectural draft of a very serious two-story project that will require much prayer and great faith. Please, please pray with us and the Kenyan team as we

plunge into this process, that the Lord will give wisdom, direction and the right builders, finances, and favor in the permitting process. More information will be coming soon.

I cannot complete this newsletter without thanking the team of people who sacrificially made the journey to Kenya, and served passionately and selflessly. Each was available for anything and was effective in whatever situation they encountered. Ben and Courtney Rousseau and Lillian Armstrong, you are amazing, we love you!



Thanks to all of you for your faithful giving, love and prayers!

LuAnn Herring, for the AC team US and Kenya

SPECIAL NOTE: As the global internet and social media make information widely available, AC donors become more accessible to Africa Connect contacts, past or present. At times this can make supporters vulnerable to attempts to procure funding for individuals and/or projects outside the purview of Africa Connect. Please know we do not condone anyone contacting you outside of our official Africa Connect channels, and cannot be held responsible for the results of any such interaction. Please feel free to contact us at info.africaconnect.us@gmail.com if you have any questions regarding this. Thank you!

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