

## Proclamation Task News Update May – August 2012

### **Close of 1<sup>st</sup> Academic Year & Trip to Israel**

At the reality and prospects for furthering my education in USA in the middle of the year 2011, no one could forestall in clear terms the impact on us living apart as a family, the effect on young Berea Church that by human eyes seemed to rely on my leadership as her “planting” pastor, the consequences on PT ministry phase of training trainers of other pastors which was in high gear at the time, the budding effort within the wider evangelical fraternity of enlisting, training, and deploying local missionaries. There were several other considerations related to my involvement in Gospel ministry and extended family responsibilities, which rendered our prediction no easy task and the anticipation unfathomable. What would happen.....if I went on to leave my family and the ministry that I so love, direct and give oversight to?

It is now over one year since our minds reflected on related implications, and now looking back we can only give God the praise and thanks for the far he has brought us – as a family, as the Berea congregation and in the work of equipping church leaders with in-service training in their own ministry context through PT. My study program has been greatly beneficial in aligning my heart and mind with appropriate distinctives in regard to loving God and living for him in this world with a heightened effectiveness. My understanding of issues that pertain to God’s mission and appreciation of prevailing contexts and realities from which he calls us to himself and in which he commissions us into the world are now deeper and better understood. I thank God for this.

In this same setting of my study program at Western, I gleaned another rare opportunity to make a Study Trip to Israel at the end of Spring Semester in May. This too, broadened and sharpened my understanding of the Bible. I have preached the Bible message for some years now, but my preaching has been marked by little regard for the places, distances, topography and geography of the Bible land, and how these shaped decisions and actions of Bible characters to reveal God to us, even now. The study trip unraveled realities and rendered me imaginations that aid my grasping of the Bible narrative as it depicts God’s nature, character and work among his people; this imprint will influence my studying, understanding and preaching of the Bible message much better.

### **Time in Uganda**

#### **Rejoining my family**

I had only been away for five months from my family but I could feel the intensity of unending days and weeks as I missed my wife and children. So from Israel when I proceeded to Uganda, it was a great reunion, so refreshing to be relationally replenished by these close and uniquely meaningful relationships at home. The children were still in school session, and I was able to fellowship with the three youngest who commuted between home and school for two months before Isabel (who takes residence at her school) eventually joined us for a full and complete house. It also looked like a new phase for the entire family as Isabel (our eldest child) turned 18 years in August. Grace and I as parents had a wonderful reflection on the past, recalling where God has brought from, how he sustained us in his work in which he has given us a sacred call to raise these children he has uniquely entrusted to us. While we looked back, Isabel’s contemplation seemed to focus on the future, wondering what God may unfold her life as a godly woman serving Christ in whatever placement God guides into. It was a fruitful family reflection and celebration.

#### **Preparing Isaac for USA**

Meanwhile, we were working to prepare Isaac to come to USA and utilize an opportunity that had opened for him at Veritas School in Newberg, to continue his studying there. Close family friends expressed a willingness to be his host family at the close of 2011 and it became heightened as we

worked on Isaac's new passport, documentation from his former and new school, student visa, travel ticket and putting other relevant things in place. Isaac and I traveled to from Uganda and arrived in the USA ten days ago as students – he joining high school and I to continue on my Doctor of Missiology program at Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon. Isaac is now attending classes in Newberg, while living with Don and Lori Top, his hosts in Salem. Gladly, of the four among the Tops' children, two younger brothers are still at home and go to school with Isaac. Nikolaas is only a year older than Isaac while Pieter is about two years younger than Isaac. Since he joined them, they have been such a joyful tripartite, giving Isaac the needed guidance and support in his new home, his new school, this new country and culture. Isaac is in a strong Christian environment – at home, at school and at church – which we consider the best entry points into any society. With this setting and the input there off, we pray that he may draw wisdom marked by spiritual discernment and a pursuit of purity and love in Christ Jesus.

### **The Field Research and Training Trips**

Since its inception, PT has mainly operated with a compass rather than with a speedometer. Thus, rather than the pace, emphasis has been laid on charting the direction for the ministry in ways that reflect a well-grounded biblical stance, a ministry philosophy that is expressed in context-sensitive practice and an enduring consistency that bears fruit - even if it were one fruit at a time as long as that fruit will last.

With this thinking, I sought to carry out my field research simultaneously with the training of pastor. My topic – The Quest for A Transformative Spirituality – seeks to establish the gap between the numerical strength of Christianity and its seemingly weak influence on society, while formulating a remedy for the "gap". The pastors recognize a great Christian presence in Uganda (at 85.2%), and they also recognize that society has little to show in the vitality of such a majority. The relevant questions and possible answers to this discrepancy (or chasm) marked our discussion and written inquiry as I made several trips to Mbarara, Namayingo and Manafwa with this "ethnographic research". The final inquiry was held with regional coordinators of PT, as an action participation research in Kampala. It was an exciting time for the pastors to know that I have brought my study program to them so we can ponder on it together. They were very helpful and felt so involved that they were given this opportunity to be contributors to what may yield a remedy for the current malady of Gospel ministry in Uganda.

### **PT Center: Construction of Classroom Block**

Another important engagement for me during my time in Uganda was to supervise the construction of the PT Center Classroom building. PT acquired 10 acres of land near Kampala about ten years ago and a Campus Master Plan was developed in 2005. The classroom building foundation was laid in September 2010, and we erected some portions of the walls on it during that time as donations permitted us. Now, the walls are all up and ready for the roof.

Given the significance and implications of a training facility for our ministry in this phase of growth, God's people put together enough resources to complete the walls. It took about two months for about 15 men to complete the 70-metre long structure. It is now ready for the roof, which becomes our next phase as we wait on God to once again avail the needed resources in this and other phases, so that we can go deeper with trainers of other pastors, while going broader in reaching more pastors through multiplying the hands for the task.

We gave focus to training trainers in 2008 and out of this effort, 12 Bible Schools have been established in different regions of Uganda to keep the work going beyond sporadic (often unconnected) seminars. We did this without scaling back on the seminars and conferences, but these serve an initiatory purpose for working relations, understanding the biblical standard of preaching and methods for ministry. Usually, following such a consistency in the region the pastors

mobilize their congregations to secure land and develop facilities for sustained Bible teaching. At that point our role shifts to training the trainers who will now serve as instructors in this institute, availing books for their library, giving relevant materials and continually upgrading and multiplying them to reach more church leaders with a training program defined by selected and qualified instructors as well as a curriculum that is biblical and contextual for a powerful indigenization of Christian work in a particular region.

Places such as Kisoro which were the first test-regions for this phase are now training local missionaries because the churches have become healthy. They planted five churches between Jan and July this year, commissioning well-trained pastors whom they are still supporting to establish the congregations in the Word. This is small but exciting and promising too. To know that the health of any church is expressed in its outreach endeavor has given pastors a higher goal that defines their work and marks their sacrifice as well as shaping their prayer.

### **Combining pastor-training with regional vision-casting**

How do we do it? We begin with questions grounded in Scripture as to what the mission of the church is in a particular region and how they grasp this. Once the Bible resolves us on this matter, we ask what kind of local church will take such a mission to this end. We also let the Bible speak to us and resolve this in ecclesiological terms. Then we ask, "in light of such a task, what kind of man would lead the church to this godly end?" We go back to Scripture to have this resolved by the needed and source of knowledge, the character and skills. Then we ask, "What kind of training or qualifications and aptitudes would enable such a man to lead such a church for such a mission?" On and on we get to the real training needs without losing focus of God's higher and broader purpose for lost souls, struggling saints, deceptive preachers, syncretistic life-styled parishioners, and disheartened servants of Christ. The more I have seen ungodly and anti-God tendencies reversed for the good of the church and for the glory of Christ, the more I have loved this work, and given myself even the more to it.

It is to this cause that the PT Center training facility will respond - enlisting trainers, training them so as to standardize and qualify them, before redeploying them to pioneer and work through Bible Schools for a sustained and broadening ministry marked by a cross-centered evangelism and discipleship at every turn. Please join us in prayer for resources to complete this facility and prayerfully consider practical involvement through giving as God enables and guides you to it.

### **Ministry at Berea**

My involvement back in Berea was a busy one yet so refreshing in renewed fellowship and new friendships among some who have joined the church in recent times. I served at the pulpit most of the time and completed our preaching schedule that began in June 2011 through the Gospel of John. We concluded this on July 29<sup>th</sup> and set out with another series "Saved without a Doubt" which will be concluded in September 2013. The church continues to grow as more people join in and commit themselves to the Lord, to his service through Berea, and to one another in fellowship.

### **PT's Sustainable Livelihood Project**

It has always been Grace's desire to reach the pastors' wives with the Word and in deed. My wife and I are privileged to have learnt some lessons even through hardships of how God calls and commissions a man and his wife into ministry. One of the striking things is how a wife's supportive role draws her into a oneness with her husband – one mind, one purpose and though, applied to life and ministry through their different roles. Grace has had opportunities to share and encourage pastors' wives in specific ways through which their involvement in ministry as partners can be expressed through every woman's effort that allows her husband to minister without worry about domestic provisions and family welfare. A portrait of an industrious wife of Prov. 31:10-31 has

served Grace as anchor towards her “family wholeness theology” whose implementation should result in God’s Shalom in a pastor’s home. Grace and I note the following underlying principles that ground such a project for a holistic life:

- The basis of abundance is Christ and the expressions of this abundance include the harnessing, multiplying and utilization of the material resources along Kingdom priorities. Innovation, creativity, wise planning are part of this engagement as God blesses hard work.
- Health, wealth and prosperity are biblical and God centered issues. Aligned along biblical and thus Kingdom priorities (Matt. 6:33), they are appropriate outcomes of living a Christ centered Gospel.
- The question: “What is in your hand?” can be resolved widely in a single perspective of true biblical discipleship that teaches responsibility, accountability, hard work and creativity, to stand well enough to help others stand provided for. In resolving this question, we know that our work matters to God and provisions for life through productivity in living, sustenance, sharing to uplift others, and possessions in life (think 1 Tim 6:17-19) are central to living out the Gospel of Christ.
- We believe that livelihood is the point at which the Word of God becomes the work of God so that in his pursuit we are working the word. Just like life resources are transient demanding timely and wise engagement which can effectively turn the perishable of the world into the imperishable of heaven, productivity and stewardship are assessed in both history and eternity (Matt. 6:19-24)

It is this understanding that now launches Grace, within the PT philosophy and practice of ministry to other women who serve with their husbands in Gospel ministry. In this call, Grace started rearing chicken both to provide for her family and also to use some profits to uplift other families.

God heard our prayers in this, and a concerned and loving couple availed a fund to get the “*Sustainable Livelihood Project*” in a more effective shape. With this fund, Grace has already started mobilizing pastors’ wives and seeking understanding how to help them uplift themselves from hindrances related to poverty that hold back Gospel ministry both in word and outlook of a pastor’s own family. She has made several “capital support allocations” to different homes in different measures according to need and feasibility. Some keep sheep, pigs and goats, others keep bees for honey, others farm the land and so on. Grace will be on the road next year with me to assess these projects and broaden the work while making it sustainable through seminars that will help resolve the question: “What is in your hand?”

### **Partnership prospects with WHBI**

During the PT regional coordinators’ meeting of July 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, we were blessed to host Dr. Stuart Sheehan who is the President of World Hope Ministries International. The World Hope Bible Institute within this ministry was established in 2008 to provide systematic training for pastors and leaders in remote areas, with curriculum providing biblical instruction on subjects that are foundational to every Christ-honoring church.

The pastors enjoyed good and constructive interaction with Stuart, discussing the prospects of partnership – roles, expectations, time-frame, the curriculum, the personnel and several other issues as they relate to a joint effort. The timeliness of such a partnership is welcome in PT as we prepare for formal enrollment of pastors and local missionaries. We were satisfied with what is offered by WHBI and the good ground it finds laid by PT for 12 years in relationships, structure and a continuous mobilization. PT looks forward to benefitting from WHBI not only through the

coming of the instructors or the instruction, but also WHBI's contributory provision of these pastors with some assistance for travel expenses to attend, as well as food and lodging where need be, while in class.

Dr. Stuart Sheehan completed both his masters and doctoral degrees at the University of Texas, Austin. Involved in international mission work for more than 35 years Stuart has traveled extensively and served as an adjunct professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. A family man, Stuart and his wife Amy have three children. Please keep in prayer for this joint effort, that God would use our coming together for his glory in the world.

### **On the Horizon**

My study program is currently on-going as I compile and arrange data for my dissertation. I have drawn a schedule that will, God willing allow me to graduate on April 27 2013. We are planning and praying to have Grace and the rest of the children with her in Uganda visit me in December and January. Generous families have put together tickets for two of them out of the four that they are. Kindly pray that God may make this possible through provision.

Once I complete the study program, I hope to return to Uganda in May to resume a focused and more effective involvement in the ministry, now that I have gained quite through this training. Once again I comprehend that to whom much is given, much is expected; so please keep me in prayer that my labor in Gospel work will yield greater and permanent fruit.

Thank you for keeping us close to your hearts through prayer and affection, as well as sustaining your share in this labor of love.

Report by

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