



Ferguson Report



Vol. 2 No. 12

“Go ye unto all the world”

December 2005

Back From Tanzania

Every time I return from such a journey as the one **Josh Barnett** and I took to Tanzania, I find it very overwhelming trying to put into words what I should try to convey. In all, the journey lasted only 22 days (Nov 14 – Dec 5). That doesn't sound like many days if the context is the daily routine of American life. But when you put those days into the perspective of Africa – well, that's a different story.

I find myself taking fewer pictures now days which I suppose is a mistake. I only have several thousand. This trip I took 104. In contrast, being his first trip, Josh took over 300! And it was evident from the splendid presentation he gave Sunday night at the Westside congregation in Brownsville, TN that Josh will never forget the “dark continent.”

The Journey There

Monday morning, **Jack Christie** of the North Jackson congregation drove me to Memphis to meet up with Josh. We checked our bags through to Kilimanjaro Int. and began the first leg of our flights to Detroit. There we connected to an 8-hour flight to Amsterdam on board a Northwest Airbus 330. Roughly an hour and a half later after landing in Amsterdam, we boarded again and settled in for another 8-hour flight on our way to Tanzania. Each leg of the flights was without any major incident – as we always pray. The only real attention-getter was while we were flying southward over the western coast of Italy where we entered some turbulence. Nothing major until the KLM DC-10 made one of those sensations like you're going over “thrill-hill” and then ended with an abrupt jerk of the tail to the right sending our food trays to the floor. Oh well, I didn't really like the food on that flight anyway.

Arusha and Moshi

At nearly 9:00 p.m. Tanzania time, we landed at Kilimanjaro Int. and were greeted by **Jimmy Gee** and one of his twin daughters, **Abigail** who is ten. Jimmy works as the academic dean of the Andrew Connally School of Preaching. After getting through immigration and customs we loaded our luggage and headed toward Arusha. While we were driving, poor Abigail who was sitting next to Josh in the back seat became car-sick. She kept repeating, “*I'm so sorry dad.*” Jimmy stopped the truck and cleaned up as best as he could. The thought running through Josh's mind must have been: “*Welcome to Africa.*” Jimmy proceeded to take us the rest of the way to the home of **Cy & Stephanie Stafford** who happened to be in the states for a furlough. **Ben Thompson**, who was “house-sitting” for Cy & Stephanie thought it would be more convenient for us to stay there. Thank-you Cy & Stephanie.

The next morning after breakfast, Ben drove us into Arusha to exchange money, purchase local flight tickets and

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As the report in this newsletter will bear out, this work would be an impossibility without the support of the Lord's people. I would be failing in my service to God without acknowledging those of you who have contributed financially to this work in 2005. I honor you and applaud you not only for your care of us but for what I believe to be a tremendous avenue through which the gospel can more efficiently reach both the metropolitan man and the man in the bush. **Thank-you!**
Howell

malaria medicine, get phone cards, etc. That afternoon, we met with the Arusha church for Wednesday Bible study. I truly enjoyed seeing our brethren again and meeting new faces as well—which is a good indicator of the church’s growth. A question I was repeatedly asked was “*When is sister Mary coming?*” I told them Lord willing she will be traveling with me in May 2006. That night we ate at my favorite Chinese restaurant in the world – “Dragon Pearl” where I ordered my usual spicy lemon chicken. Thursday, Ben gave Josh and me a tour of the TZ2000 work taking us to see the new facilities of the Andrew Connally School of Preaching and the Arusha Bible School. I was already familiar with the TZ2000 program and the new construction, but since this was Josh’s first visit to Tanzania he wanted to see these good works for himself. Moreover, Josh and **Noel Stafford**, Cy & Stephanie’s oldest son, are good friends. So this gave Josh the opportunity to finally experience those things he once only heard Noel talk about.

Friday, we traveled to Moshi to visit the second major project of the TZ2000 work. Located in Moshi are housed the Kilimanjaro church of Christ, the Kilimanjaro Bible School, and the **Christopher Mwakabanji** family—all in one building. Ben worked with Christopher for the past two years teaching in the KBS and helping with the work of the Kilimanjaro church. It was good visiting with Christopher, his wife **Julia** and two of their children. After our visit in Moshi, Ben drove us to the Kilimanjaro Int. airport to catch our local flight to Dar-es-Salaam. I was anxious to make this flight so we could move forward to our primary purpose for coming to Tanzania: teach at the Chimala Bible College.

Dar-es-Salaam

Once at the airport, we said “so-long” to Ben; however, we would see him again on the return leg of our flight from Kilimanjaro Int. to Amsterdam. The Air Tanzania jet we boarded fully-loaded with passengers took-off, made a stop-over at Zanzibar, and arrived a few minutes later at Dar. The climate in Dar is quite different from that in Arusha. Dar is a sea-port city located on the Indian Ocean and is normally hot and very humid. However, due to cloudy conditions, it was fairly comfortable.

We were greeted by **Darrin Stapleton**, **Jason Stapleton**, **Andrew Linkoss**, and **Brandon Marshall**—a new missionary at Chimala and a recent graduate of Brown Trail School of Preaching. Because the journey from Dar to Chimala is about 11 hours, we stayed overnight in Dar to leave early Saturday morning. Darrin, who had been somewhat sick, went to bed a little sooner than the rest of us especially since he was our driver.

The Drive to Chimala

Before daylight, we loaded up the Land Cruiser and were on our way. The trip is quite picturesque especially if it is your first time there. The road we travel takes you straight through the Mikumi Nat. Park. However, after making approx. 50 trips this year, Darrin’s objective was more concerned with getting from point A to point B than seeing animals and breath-taking views. Once the improvement to the Mbeya airport is completed, these frequent and sometimes precarious road trips will be greatly reduced.

Yet, what would a “*safari*” (Swahili for “*journey*”) in Africa be without something going wrong? As I recall, every trip to or from Chimala had some little “*something*” to happen. This



time, it was a flat tire—a very common and minor African experience. But it was Darrin’s chronic cough that should have concerned us more as you will see.

Arrival at Chimala

Land Cruisers have a good reputation for being reliable sturdy vehicles. But after riding 6 grown men with full luggage—much of which was secured to the top of the truck which tends to create a sometimes nauseating back-and-forth swaying motion, the Chimala Mission was a welcoming sight. Arriving at about 4:30 that afternoon, we unloaded our luggage into the west side of the visitors’ duplex which became our home for the next two weeks. **Carrie**, Darrin’s wife, had prepared for us a delicious chicken & dumplings supper. Josh and I truly enjoyed the hospitality and then returned to the duplex to unpack. The climate at the mission was different than I had ever seen it. Actually, I had anticipated that that region of the country might have begun the short rains. I had even suggested to Josh that he bring a small umbrella. But the conditions were much different than I had expected. Everything was dry. The grass was all but dead. Only the plants that received daily watering by the gardeners were thriving in the rich red soil. Everything was dead. It was also hot – much more so than during my last visit to Chimala earlier in March when the mission was a green thriving paradise.

First Sunday Worship

Sunday morning Josh and I accompanied Darrin & Carrie, their son **Jacob**, and Andrew Linkoss to a small village church called “*Chosi A*” where I was asked to preach. Most of these small bush congregations meet in a rough brick or mud building with either tin or thatch roofing. The seats are normally small, short, and wobbly wooden benches. However, this church had solid concrete benches. No danger of these falling over. Even though Darrin speaks fluent Swahili, he normally uses a translator. Following a few Swahili songs and prayer, Andrew translated for me as I preached. Following the lesson, one of the men spoke a few words preparing us to partake of the communion, and then afterwards, a collection was taken up. Far from the cries of some among us to “*jazz-up*” our worship, these humble Christians worshipped God simply and scripturally—a sweet smelling savior before our God.

Later Sunday afternoon, some of the other missionary families returned from visiting more distant congregations. At

4:00 some of us worshipped with the Chimala congregation and then later at 5:00 all of the missionary families, including Josh and me, met in a classroom at the CSOP building for an English devotional. Following songs and prayer, **Leon McManus** presented some challenging lessons from 1 Kings 12.

Worshiping here in the states is always a great weekly blessing, but there's something special about worshiping with people who have nothing by the world's standard, but have everything in Christ. Without the luxuries of padded pews and other creature comforts we are accustomed to, worshiping in the bush can be somewhat tiring. That was the way I felt the end of that day – a little tired, perhaps too tired and I began a series of visits to the restroom. That should have told me something.

First Days of Class

I had previously arranged for Josh to teach his class on Personal Evangelism the first week, and I would teach Acts the second week. On Monday morning, the first day of class, **Bernard Kulanga**, director of CBC, and Darrin introduced Josh and me to the CBC students. There were a total of eleven students, six less than we had anticipated, but enough to begin and maintain the program. This number will increase as news of the college spreads throughout the churches in that region and anticipated support is received.

Since it was morning at Chimala, the temperature was comfortable which was fortunate for Josh since there was an electrical problem with the CBC building. Later in the day, however, the need for electricity for the ceiling fans would become apparent. Josh's first four hours (8 – 12) went well; however, like me, Josh felt particularly fatigued but was not having the other symptoms. That afternoon after lunch Josh went back to class for two more hours. It became very warm in the duplex and the classroom. I wasn't feeling any better and decided to go to the Chimala Hospital pharmacy and purchase a dosage of cipro to fight whatever it was I got from Darrin. (Darrin had been having the same symptoms plus vomiting.) As warm as it was, that evening I was shivering from fever and went to bed early.

The next morning, Josh began having the same symptoms as me. I offered to sit-in on his class for him and give the students some assignments, but he insisted on teaching. I brought him a dosage of cipro as well. We ruled out malaria because we were taking a malaria preventative and had only been in the country five days when the symptoms began. Besides, it would have been very unusual for both of us to have contracted malaria at the same time.

The missionary families also had a planned event at lunch in Mbeya that day to celebrate Thanksgiving in an African kind of way, even though Thanksgiving wasn't until Thursday. A place in Mbeya was serving turkey and trimmings obviously to accommodate American guests. Darrin invited Josh and me to go, but due to the ongoing classes and our puny health we graciously declined.

Getting Better

By Wednesday, I was feeling much better but still somewhat fatigued and craving fruit juice. Josh was feeling a little better and managed to continue teaching his class although he had all but lost his appetite. Later that afternoon we had Bible study at a small church in a village called "*Keko Juu*." Brandon led the class while Josh and I sat looking somewhat "*washed-out*."

The remainder of the week our health began to improve, Josh was eating a little more, we were able to interact more with the mission, and I was able to work more on my Acts class notes. Thursday morning, Darrin and I met for several hours to discuss pressing issues involving the Chimala Bible College. In addition, I met several times with Bernard to address "*1001 issues*" (as he called them) pertaining to the CBC and his directorship. We had tried to correspond by e-mail over the past several months. But due to the infrequency of Bernard's visits to Mbeya (one-hour drive to the nearest internet café) sometimes separated by two or more weeks, and the unreliability of their internet connections, communication between us remained a frustrating experience at best. As a result, I have taken on the challenge of trying to raise funds to have an internet satellite system installed at the Chimala Mission next year. This will not only significantly assist in communications with CBC, but it will also be a real benefit to the Chimala Mission Hospital, as well as improve the morale of the Chimala missionary families who are otherwise cut-off from their families back in the states.

The week-end of Nov. 26th - 27th, Josh and I caught a ride with Leon to Mbeya on Saturday to purchase a few supplies and to check and write e-mails. Sunday, we worshiped with the Chimala congregation. I taught the Bible class on—you guessed it—an introduction to Acts. Josh was asked to preach, and later that afternoon he also gave the lesson for the English devotional.

Second Week of Class

By the time my week to teach arrived, I could tell the students were feeling the weariness of class. However, they never complained and continued forward as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. They had just completed 30 hours of class with Josh and were about to begin another 30 hours with me. Remember, English is not these men's native tongue. I have to continually force myself to speak English as clearly and distinctly as possible, which is a challenge to me. If we are not careful, our southern dialect can easily send these men into a communication spin.



Our Objectives

We began each class at 7:30 with a short devotional inviting a student, Josh, or me to give a 5-7 minute talk. In my class the students were given a daily quiz plus six memory verses, and then a final exam on Friday. Josh's class was similar except

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he gave daily projects instead of quizzes. Following our classes, the students are required to prepare sermons, a research paper, and do outside reading.

One day Bernard commented to me: *“If we have a paper for each course, and there are 48 courses, that means we have to prepare 48 papers.”* I responded, *“Yes.”* No one ever said this would be an easy school. We are not trying to make it hard. But a program that is easy would not be worth pursuing, and the end result would not accomplish our objective: to train men to evangelize their areas and exercise Christian leadership in the churches so that they might become self-supporting and self-propagating congregations (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

During my five days of teaching Acts, Josh availed himself to accompany Leon in doing village evangelism. I thought it was humorous when Josh returned home one afternoon with a bright red glowing African sunburn and a wide smile on his face saying, *“We just baptized three people today!”* Experiences like these are what reinvigorate preachers to greater spiritual service and to more far-reaching heavenly ambitions than they had in the past. I am persuaded that a man or woman has the potential to become 10 times greater a servant of God by going to the mission field. It is all about perspective. And Africa will give you that much-needed perspective about what is truly important in life. Not only did Josh assist in these peoples’ conversion to Christ, he also left enough money to build a meeting house for a small village church in the bush.

Sometimes well-meaning Christians question the financial feasibility of sending people on short-term mission trips. To those serious inquiries let me respond:

- Christian students were taught in a class on Personal Evangelism and studied from the key book on that subject: the book of Acts.

- A number of churches were visited and edified.
- Missionaries were encouraged in their labors.
- Several precious lost souls came to know and obey Jesus.
- A church building was funded.
- No less than 17 churches and well over 2000 Christians directly or indirectly contributed to all of the above.

Not bad for three weeks in Africa.

Time to Return Home

Following a *“send-off”* from the local Chimala missionaries, we began our journey home with another 11-hour drive to Dar. Once we arrived we checked into the Swedish Mission and ate supper at the local *“Steers”* (South African hamburger chain). Sunday morning, we worshiped with one of the Dar congregations where I was invited to preach. My lesson was on the conversion of Cornelius. The local preacher was **Dennis Mnavu**, a recent graduate of the ACSOP in Arusha. That evening Josh and I took that last shower in preparation for the long day awaiting us as we flew back to the states. We boarded and flew out around mid-night. During the 6 ½ hour layover in Amsterdam, we both got our McDonald’s hamburger *“fix.”* Later, I worked on some reports while Josh did some shopping in the Schiphol airport until our departure for the U.S. At a few minutes before 5:00 Monday afternoon our plane touched down at Memphis International. Mission accomplished. Thank-you Josh for your sacrifice and spiritual service for the Tanzanians.

Howell

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;
and he that winneth souls is wise.

Proverbs 11:30