



Pulse of the Congregation

February, 2017

Kenya Mission Reflections

by Brother Brian Herren



Eight of the Saints from the Pacific Northwest were blessed to serve in Kenya this winter. We left our homes and loved ones on December 15, 2016 in the middle of a snow and ice storm and would not return until January 1, 2017. Those traveling included four youth leaders, three recent high school graduates, and a high school senior. During the mission we served a youth camp in Kisumu, visited various branches of the church in Kenya, and shared the Restored Gospel with groups and individuals wherever we were sent. Brother James Yogo and his wife, Sister Ruth, opened their home to us while we stayed in Nairobi, and lovingly blessed us by treating us as family. We wish to thank them and publish their good deeds for all they did on our behalf. In Kisumu, our team stayed with Brother Eric and Sister Pamela Odida where we were treated with the utmost kindness and generosity,

and lacked nothing. Sister Pamela was a faithful and compassionate mother to us all. Brother Eric directed the mission with wisdom. We are also deeply appreciative of the hospitality offered by Brother Austin and Sister Jane Odicoh while we stayed in Bonde. While in Bonde, we shared with a group in Konyango Apusa, where I believe another branch of the church is imminent after witnessing their reception of several gospel teachings. A class was taught on repentance and baptism, followed by classes covering priesthood authority, the organization and function of Christ's church, the apostasy, the restoration of Christ's true and living church on April 6, 1830, and the Book of Mormon. These fundamental teachings were also shared at Mbeme, where the listening congregation voiced delight in that which they had heard and expressed their desire to join the church and establish a branch in that village. From home to home, village to village, and day by day, we felt the tender mercies of our loving Father upon us, His Spirit making straight the way, and His hand gently opening the doors before us.

To be forthright, the eight of us that traveled are weak and just learning, the adopted sons of a cause more noble than we can rightly claim. There is a lot for us to learn and our failures reminded us. Still, God is able to work where men are weak, and He gives us weakness that we might be humble. Something good was worked in a beautiful land filled with a faithful people, but something beautiful was also worked in our hearts. I will never forget returning to Nairobi on our last night in Kenya. We stayed in the exact same room where we had stayed on our first day in Africa. We slept in the exact same beds, and washed in the same waters. One of the missionaries commented on how nice everything in that room now seemed, and how the same place had seemed so much more base and scary on the first night. Something had changed between our first night there and our last. The missionary said, "I don't think the room has been made new, but I think my eyes have been made new". I could have wept. When a man has new eyes with which to see, and a new heart with which to feel, I know he is not far from the Kingdom. Perhaps one of the greatest missionary fields remains the untamed portions of our rebel hearts. When we go out, we come ever more in, nearer and nearer in the Spirit of Christ.

During our final days in Kenya it was hard not to feel the impending shadow of our departure. I have been to East Africa three times and never once felt ready to leave. The tremendous natural beauty, the warmth of the people, and the opportunity to bear record of the Light captures one's heart. It is a beautiful and joyful place, and even the hardships of daily life and disease cannot help but accent the grace of God and His providential care. There is an unmistakable connection between the poor in resource and the poor in spirit that causes a humble people to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

"Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit, who come unto me; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And again, blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. And blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost."

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It is in the drought stricken fields and the dusty hills that one can more easily understand that all that we have is God. And it is in the cheerful countenances of the Kenyan people that one understands that He is all that we ever need. The lessons of my youth become practical there, and Bible verses take form beyond the words which we speak so easily in a more comfortable habitat. I wish I could return and stay another month right now. It's hard to say whether we are more strangers here or there, when the Spirit of God makes every habitation of our Father feel more the home than that which men can build.

We did not suffer in Kenya, but we met those who did. We did not go hungry, but we have seen men beg. We did not thirst, but we saw some who were not likely to live through the day. It seems that experiences like this make fertile the soil of one's heart, that the compassion of Christ might flourish within. The calluses we have unknowingly developed and the depraved indifference within are worn away layer by layer until the most human parts of us and the most godly parts touch. We celebrated Christmas in Kenya. Still, though Christ be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, if He be not born in our hearts, we are doomed. What can Bethlehem be to us without if we have not Bethlehem within? What is a Savior of men at the right hand of God if He be not the Savior at the center of our hearts, to change our view and clarify our mission?

It was hard to leave. This is the work we were made for. May the most important mission field of our lives always be the one wherein we find ourselves at any given time, beginning in our homes and community, and spreading far beyond. Wherever we be, people are people, and God is God. It is the mediation between the two that develops the most clear appreciation for the nature of Christ, and the most genuine adoration for His loving intercession. When we stand in the gap, we stand with the Lord...for Him, by Him, through Him, and in Him. May He be glorified forever.

We have not forgotten the foundation and strength of the homes from which we have come, built firmly upon that Rock which gave us so great a liberty abroad. We have not forgotten our branches, the flocks where we are fed, or the shepherds who feed us. May they be honored in our letters, and our mothers and fathers. We know this mission started with the prayers of our mothers before we could walk, and was cultivated by the hymns that our fathers sang in truth, and many a fiery sermon to straighten us in our youth. We thank God for His work here...and there...until both are one in Zion.



My Testimony

by Brother Kevin Herren



"Lo! It is my will that my gospel shall be preached to all nations in every land, and that men of every tongue shall minister before me." Section 116:1b. I have recently been blessed to have the opportunity to travel to Kenya where my eyes were opened to a truth which I have al-

ways understood in an intellectual way. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been taken to the thirsty in Kenya in a way which is unfamiliar. Understanding the social and economic situations in Kenya, I stepped off the plane expecting to find a down heartened and troubled people. I expected to be able, by the grace of God, to be some sort of blessing to the saints in Africa who are few in number comparatively speaking.

What I found in Kenya was a group of saints who have caught hold of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I found a people who hungered and thirsted for the word of God. My eyes were opened to the power of the gospel which is undeniable. Our brothers and sisters some 9000 miles away received us into their homes as though they had known us all their lives. There was a bond which can only be found in the children of God. The hand of God is at work in mighty ways in areas which we know not. It astonishes me to this day; the pure joy and peace which the saints in Kenya live their lives. There is an understanding there which is seldom seen in my life which is that in all things...ALL things we must rely upon God. The word of God is quick and powerful to the dividing asunder of both joints and marrow and has taken root in the lives of our brothers and sisters across the world. The word of God has brought men from fighters to soldiers of the cross, from men filled with drunkenness to men filled with the Holy Ghost. I met men and women whose lives have been transformed from utter hopelessness to that of exceeding peace and joy. Never have I seen a more faithful and thankful people. Daily there were prayers of sincere thanksgiving that they actually awoke that day. Never a word of discontent or complaint was heard. My testimony is this: the God of the universe is working. He works tirelessly without rest. He works in places which men forget about or seldom consider. Our God has sent the redeeming word to East Africa and the faithful have heard and responded in ways which are unimaginable and most beautiful. The one true church flourishes at the hand of the almighty!

My Testimony

by Sister Melissa Clark



Having the opportunity to travel to Kenya was such an amazing blessing from God. I was privileged to go with an amazing team and we shared many experiences that I will never forget. I was very blessed even from the beginning stages of our mission. God blessed me with a fundraising idea that made the way for me to raise the funds to go and not be a burden to those around me. He was with us the whole journey and I will forever be thankful for the things I witnessed there. On the plane ride there however, I began to have a sore throat. I thought it was just from the long traveling hours, and so I pushed it out of my mind. I am the type of person who only gets sick once a year and I had been praying that God wouldn't allow it to be during the mission time.

We arrived and all were in good spirits so I felt that everything would turn out fine. As each day went on though, my cold progressed. It turned from a little runny nose to a tickle in my throat, and on the last day of the youth retreat some girls asked if I had a "cool cough", which meant that I had a cold. I didn't know why God had given this cold to me in such a sacred time, but it forced me to rely on Him even more. At the end of the camp I had completely lost my voice, and this lasted for a few days. It was especially worrisome to me because as a group we had prepared ministries of music and without my parts they could not be shared.

The day we visited the Lisana branch my voice was especially bad. I knew that this branch was very special in the sight of God and I wanted to be a blessing unto it. I was asked if I was physically able to sing and I replied quickly with a "yes!" However, doubt crept in and as I sat there I began to realize that I couldn't even speak, so how would I be able to sing those high notes? I started to pray and I asked God to just allow me to sing those two songs and that I would be okay with having no voice for the rest of the day. I got up and I did it. God really blessed me to sing those high notes, and the Spirit poured out so strongly that day in leading the entire service.

God also really blessed me in that even though I was sick, I never felt sick. I was not extra tired, I never had a sore throat (besides on the airplane), and I was able to sing every day. There were many testimonies happening every day within our group and also outside of it, and it was beautiful to witness. It was an extraordinary trip, one that I hope to be called to serve on again.

The Love of God Shone Down On Us

By Sister Cessaries Galusha

Traveling to Kenya was like a dream come true for me. All my life I have lived hanging on to every word that missionaries share in testimonies and sermons. Hearing about great miracles in the lives of our brothers and sisters across the globe has always been a tremendous strength to me, and has shown me how important the gospel of Jesus Christ is in this world. The saints that I heard about became great inspirations to me, and I memorized their names and the saving grace that God worked in their lives, but I never knew I would meet them face to face in their own lands!

Our group of 8 missionaries offered ministry at a youth retreat when we arrived in Kisumu, and I was charged with teaching classes on the Book of Mormon both at the retreat and as we visited branches and homes elsewhere. This assignment truly helped me appreciate the gift of this book of scripture perhaps more than I have before, and I began to see how difficult it is to comprehend the fullness of the gospel without its plainness.

About a week into the trip I began to have serious concern about some swelling in my feet. Several of our members experienced swelling on account of the long days of travel we had to get there, and I was told this was normal. However, after almost a full week had passed the swelling remained no matter what I did to relieve it. Others began to show concern as well, and I worried how much more swelling I might encounter on the return trip if it did not go down. One morning I finally brought it to the attention of our mission leader, Brian Herren. Nothing could be done at that time, but it became a matter of prayer. Immediately after this we had worship with our group before going out for the day, and I had my foot elevated as we sang hymns and prayed. During our singing, I began to feel a tingling sensation in my foot, and when I looked down I was bewildered to find that in a matter of a couple minutes, all the swelling had completely disappeared! I was completely amazed by this, realizing how unnatural it was for the swelling to disappear in such a very short time when I had been walking on it and exercising it for the week following my travels, elevating it at night, all with no avail. In my prayer that morning I was full of thanksgiving and awe in recognition of this kindness the Lord had shown me. I praise Him still for this clear sign of His presence with us. I watched it carefully the rest of the trip, and especially on the return travels, which ended up being longer than the trip to Kenya. Even through the 6-7 hour drive back to Nairobi and 40 hours of travel returning home, my feet never swelled again. Praise the Lord!

The blessings of this trip were many and great, and I will share one more of a divine appointment. One of the saints I have been particularly impressed with through the testimonies I heard from my youth is Sister Hulda Simba. Many in our group had never heard of her, but I mentioned her name a few times in my excitement to be there. After the youth retreat ended, Brothers James Yogo and Chrispin took us many places to visit and bring ministry. We did not always know where we were going, but we happily rode in the cars with them to wherever they took us, and shared our love of Jesus with the people. On one of these occasions, Vitaliy asked me to share about Hulda Simba and her

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The Love of God Shone Down On Us

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experiences because he did not know them when I mentioned her. So as we drove, I shared with the people in our car about Sister Hulda and the miraculous way God brought her to the truth and saved her soul. I added what an amazing blessing it would be for us to meet this woman while we were there in Kenya, but I did not know if that would be possible. Several minutes later we drew near to our destination, and Brother James turned around and informed us that we were going to the VERY HOME of Sister Hulda Simba! What a shock that was for our car! We knew that God was leading us even in our conversations and desires! But the testimony does not end here. We were blessed richly to meet this faithful soul and her family. We shared and visited and sang praises to the Lord. She told us that she was suffering from cancer in her eye, and she had no hope of medical attention. She had made the very long trip to Nairobi to the hospital to receive care from the doctors for her eyes, but she was turned away. The doctors were on strike and would not see her. She had to travel all the way back and the expense was for naught. All she had left was to hope in the Lord's deliverance. Brothers Brian Herren and James Yogo administered to her and we prayed for God's intervention. A day or two later, Brother Eric Odida received a call from Sister Hulda and she told him that night she had a dream and in this dream she underwent surgery for the cancer in her eye. When she awoke that morning, she felt completely healed of her affliction and suffering.

The God that we serve is true and faithful; He is full might and wisdom. None can find out His doings nor search the depths of His being. He is all powerful and present in every cell and fiber of His creation. How great is our God, and how holy are His ways. He cares for His own and never ceases His labors. He never sleeps and never weakens, and how we need Him. We honor His holy name, and bow in reverence before Him always. No one is like our God, and He is worthy to be praised!

Pinewood Derby

by Brother Brian Herren

East of the mountains, something amazing has been happening! Brothers Nathaniel and Noah Pieratt have engineered two amazing pinewood derby cars that have made a mark on the Crater Lake Council, Fremont District Pinewood Derby! On Saturday, February 25th, Brother Gary and I were able to navigate the mountain pass in order to watch the action in Bend as Brother Nathaniel and Noah competed in the district tournament. Brother Nathaniel has created a jet black race car with flames down the side and an engine so powerful that it projects through the hood. Brother Noah has constructed a derby car that looks just like an authentic Amtrak train. Nathaniel's car turned in some amazing times on the 34' 9" track, covering the distance in under 4 seconds, and Noah's train ran more consistently than any other car, proving reliably quick in every single lane at under 4 seconds. The competition was tough at the district meet, but both young men turned in some amazing times and finished as good as second place in some of the heats. Keep up the good work Nathaniel and Noah!!! You guys have done amazingly well, and have engineered two impressive race cars! It took a lot of hard work, smart thinking, and creativity to build those cars and the whole church rejoices with you! Praise God!!!



Christmas Fellowship

by Sister Cessaries Galusha

The Ladies Relief Society was able to serve together once again to deliver Christmas trees on December 3, 2016. This time, instead of having the trees already prepared for us to deliver, Sisters Melissa Herren, Suzy Herren, Elizabeth Herren and Cessaries Galusha got to experience the adventures of going to a tree farm and cutting down the tree ourselves! We were able to then drive out to Rose Nollen's home to deliver it. It was quite a fun time picking the perfect one, cutting it down, and figuring out the confusing order of the tree shaking and bundling business. We enjoyed some cocoa that was offered, lots of mud, and even running into some familiar faces of family.

A week later on December 9th, the congregation gathered at Brian and Melissa Herren's home for warming goodies and sandwiches and off we went caroling around the neighborhood! This is a tradition that has come to be loved by the congregation as we share the good news with the neighborhood about the birth of our Savior.

10th Annual Congregational Camp Out!!! Don't Miss Out!

by Brother Brian Herren

Reservations have been made for the Salem congregation's 10th annual congregational camping trip. Twelve sites at South Beach State park have been reserved for the weekend of July 7-9, 2017. Each site will accommodate an RV with full hook-ups as well as tents. The sites are larger and longer. Please notify me as soon as possible if you plan to attend. Each site is \$66 for the weekend. Checks can be made to Restored Church of Christ. Located near the Yaquina Lighthouse in Newport, OR, the park has a 9 hole disc golf course, playground, horse-shoe pits, and a jetty. The state park spans several miles of beachfront and is convenient to the Hatfield Marine Science Center and Oregon Aquarium. The campsites were reserved in such a way as to enclose a



grassy area that will be available for our common use and worship. We hope to enjoy the fellowship, beach fun, campfire services, and recreation in Christ that has made this annual tradition a cherished blessing. In recent years, our joy has multiplied as Saints from other parts of the Pacific Northwest, and even the Midwest, have joined us. As in years past, all are welcome, but campsites are reserved quickly. Please send word at your earliest convenience: 503.949.2484 or drbrianherren@gmail.com. May the Lord be glorified in our coming together.

2016 Christmas Day Worship Service

by Brother Gary Livingston

Christmas Day fell on a Sunday this year and our congregation was blessed to be able to honor the birth of our Lord and Savior through a special church service held at the Community Center in Stayton, Oregon. Our morning started with a potluck breakfast in which the saints were able to break bread together and spend time in fellowship with one another. During the 11:00 hour, ministry of music was provided through the singing of "Gentle Shepherd" by High Priest Bill Curtis, Elder Gary Livingston, and Priest Jim Clark. The morning message was delivered through High Priest Bill Curtis and was truly an inspired message. It was our desire, hope, and prayer to bear record of our Heavenly Father as we honored the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ through our worship on that special day.



Lambs Activity: Making Cards

by Sister Gabriella Herren

The Lambs Anahi, Gabriella and Daniel met together at Lisa Duke's house on January 13, 2017 to make cards. We made cards to help people feel better and to thank them for all the things they do. We wanted to help people feel better when they were sick. The adults helped and we had a lot of fun. We made more than just plain cards. The Lambs were really creative and made different kinds of shapes like hearts and crosses.

Important Easter Choir Announcement

Dear Saints, We will begin rehearsals for the Easter Choir this coming Sunday, March 5th at 8:45 AM before the regular service in the Sanctuary. If any of you would like to participate, you are welcome to join us. All are welcome, and you can invite your friends! Feel free to ask me about any questions or concerns. I look forward to us making music together and praising our God in this way! Your Sister in Christ, Cessaries

Christmas Wreath Fundraiser

by Sister Deanne Murnieks

God is good, and He surely blesses the youth of His Church when they labor together for a common goal. As the Builders and Climbers work hard throughout the year to raise the necessary funds for camps in the summer, the annual Christmas Wreath fundraiser is one of the most important efforts in this cause, raising a majority of the money necessary to fund the camps.

This year's Builders and Climbers are a relatively young group, having had three members graduate last year. But they were not to be deterred! They hit the ground running on the very first night of wreath-making, and even set nightly records on several occasions. Moreover, they were just as good at selling wreaths as they were at making them! Working together 5 evenings and a Saturday, they made and sold 144 wreaths this year, earning a total of \$2,189.00. Many members of the Salem Branch pitched in, adding their time and talents to the mix, and the Saints in Vancouver also played a vital role in supporting the efforts of our youth. But the best part is that our young people have already earned enough this year to fund the summer youth camps for the entire youth group, with over \$700.00 to spare. Because of their diligent efforts, these extra funds will be able to help the Lord's work in a variety of ways. What a blessing is their enthusiasm and joy for the entire Branch! May we be diligent in supporting them in prayer as the Lord continues His good work in them.



Builders and Climbers Blanket Drive

by Brother Kevin Herren

"For if a brother or sister be naked and destitute, and one of you say, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding he give not those things which are needful to the body; what profit is your faith unto such?" — James 2:16

With this thought in our hearts, the Builders and Climbers organized a fundraising dinner and blanket drive which was held January 28th. All were invited to come and join in the worthy cause of collecting blankets to be distributed both to the Union Gospel Mission as well as being dispersed directly to homeless on the street by saints. Money was also collected to be donated to the Union Gospel Mission. We collected over 30 blankets and 90 dollars for the cause! In addition to collecting the blankets and donations we had a wonderful time. The youth wore their formal uniforms of black and white dress clothes and served our guests from a menu of several soups, salad, bread and more. It was a beautiful sight to see the kids become so engaged as they "called dibs" on getting to help serve someone. Each builder was responsible for several guests to ensure their glass remained full and they were well taken care of. We wish to thank all those who helped in the effort to bring a bit of comfort on these chilly nights.

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." — II Corinthians 9:7



Youth Christmas/New Year Party

by Sister Lisa Dukes



Every year the youth commission holds a celebration for our Lord and Savior's birth. This activity brings our Lambs of Zion and Builders and Climbers together for a night of fellowship, fun, and worship. Due to inclement weather, the Christmas Party was postponed and was combined with the New Year's Reflection Activity that we had planned for the Builders.

The first thing that the youth did together was decorate gingerbread cookies. The youth have in previous years decorated gingerbread men, houses, and Christmas trees. This year, they decorated "Ugly Sweater" gingerbread cookies proving once again that are youth are exceptionally creative with both frosting and sprinkles. We had very tasty snacks provided by Sister Deanne, and spent some time in fellowship with one another. After we enjoyed some food, we quizzed the kids on some lesser known trivia surrounding the events of the birth of Christ. Do you know why Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem in the first place? The youth do! We sang Christmas hymns together with Sister Ginger accompanying us on the piano, and we had a fun gift exchange where a story about the birth of Christ was read and every time the words "right" or "left" was said, the gift you were holding had to be passed in that direction. Sometimes the gifts changed direction so fast that the entire game felt like playing hot potato. We then had an activity to help keep the focus of the coming year on Christ. We had a series of Balloons all with scriptures written on pieces of paper inside of them. The youth popped the balloons one at a time and the scripture was read. We talked about those scriptures and how to apply them to becoming closer to God. We talked about how study and prayer needed to be a focus in our lives in order to grow closer to our Heavenly Father. The kids then wrote a letter to themselves in a year. These letters were sealed in individual envelopes and then sealed inside a larger envelope. A year from now, these letters will be opened and the kids will be able to see where they were the beginning of 2016 and if they met the goals they wanted to set for themselves.



Ministry Going Forth From Salem in 2017

Please pray for the ministry going forth from the Pacific Northwest this year. Brother Gary Livingston has been invited to pastor the senior high youth camp at Odessa Hills, MO, and Sister Deanne will serve as a counselor: June 18-24. Brother Brian Herren has been invited to preach a 4 sermon series in the Center Place in April. Brian has also been asked to preach at the Missionary Reunion in Lamoni in June, and has been invited to serve in Nepal and India in September / October. Please keep our brothers and sisters in prayer as they give themselves to serving the Lord wherever He sends.