

# NTCC-Mbale Impact Report



NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES OF CHRIST  
MBALE REGION  
APRIL 2015

## Message from the Chairperson

Greetings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ from Mbale, Uganda. We are honored that you are partnering with us from all around the world to help spread the Gospel in East Africa.

New Testament Churches of Christ exists to plant, equip, and empower churches to participate in God's mission in the world through Jesus Christ, grounded in the written Word of God.

In 2014, we have continued the work that has been ongoing in East Africa for over thirty years. We have focused on areas of church planting

and discipleship, rural church development, town church development, church leader education, and youth and women's ministries.

God has blessed us with an amazing staff here in Mbale. We currently have four missionaries working with the mission.

Dennis Okoth and I are overseeing the work with churches and pastors. Daryl Bates is assisting with leader development at Mbale Church of Christ. And Jill Robinson is coordinating the women's SEW Ministry. We are so thankful for a strong group of nationals that work along side of us. Junic Peace is our administrative guru and keeps us all in line! Gillian Wanyabiti oversees our finances and bookkeeping. We have three women teaching in the SEW ministry, as well as staff responsible our AIDS Orphan project, for youth ministry, food services, compound maintenance and other needs of the mission.

We pray that you will be blessed as you read about what God is doing in Mbale. Once again, we are grateful that you are partnering with us. Without you, the work here would be incomplete. We look forward to continuing to make disciples of Jesus Christ in East Africa. Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support.

For the King and Kingdom,

J.P. Robinson  
Chairperson of NTCC



J.P. Robinson and Dennis Okoth



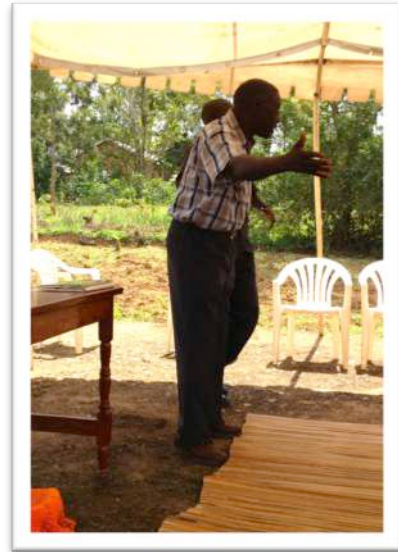
NTCC-Mbale staff

## Church Planting and Discipleship

### Rural Churches (J.P. Robinson)

Dennis and I, as well as others from the mission office, have been traveling almost every Sunday to visit with churches and clusters. In 2014, we were able to visit 18 clusters in different districts especially eastern region. This represents around 140 churches. The reasons for the visits are as follows:

1. To demonstrate and secure a strong relationship. Unlike some of the churches in and around Mbale, many are a considerable distance and have not received a visitor from the mission (especially a missionary) in years. In 2015, we will make several 8+ hour drives within our visitation schedule.
2. Encouragement-lack of visitation from the mission coupled with remote locations can lead to a church or cluster feeling isolated and discouraged. We take time to understand their situation and encouragement them in their progress.
3. To communicate a clear direction and to listen to questions/concerns/requests-All of the turnover we've experienced, including the departure of missionaries and removal of key nationals associated with the work (James, William, etc.), has caused concern among some of the churches. There have been rumors floating around that the mission is "without leadership and direction." This is not a surprise, due to the lack of information (or bad information) these churches have experienced. As can be the case, when people lack information they sometimes make it up. Dennis and I are spending time with leaders,



answering all of their questions regarding issues such as church planting, development, benevolence, continuing education and seminars. A key principle we are communicating is our commitment to plant churches with spiritually mature leadership in place as the church begins. This principle ties directly into our discipleship emphasis.

4. To provide Bibles and other materials—When we travel, we are bringing a Bible for each cluster represented. Our goal in the future is to get a Bible into the

hands of every person who needs one. For now, we travel with one per cluster. We also bring additional teaching materials for children which are written in Luganda and Lugisu. Celebrating the Lord's supper every Sunday seems to be something that our churches struggle to do. Because of this, we are providing communion supplies (tray and cups) to at least one church within the cluster. We were also able to deliver promised iron sheets for roofing to 24 churches.

### Discipleship (J.P. Robinson)

As mentioned before, we are committed to plant churches with spiritually mature leaders in place. As Dennis and I visited churches over the past two years, we began to see a lack of spiritual maturity among the pastors. The questions that were asked and the requests that were made were evidence that these churches were being led by men and women who hadn't experienced in-depth discipleship. Through prayer and fasting, we decided that we needed to have a greater emphasis on personal, life-on-life discipleship. Deep discipleship happens away from the crowds and outside of the classroom. But how could Dennis and I disciple over 300 pastors in an intimate setting? After much discussion, we decided to implement discipleship cohorts: small groups of men and women that we would disciple with the hope that one day they too will disciple other men and women.



In February of 2015, we launched our first discipleship cohort. This initial group consists of 9 pastors who were selected based on their character and faithfulness to the work of the mission over the years. The goal of this program is to create Biblical disciples in



relational environments. These men travel to our campus and stay with us from Thursday evening to Saturday afternoon. The accommodations are the same as MTI, utilizing our dorms for sleeping arrangements. Furthermore, our staff cooks provide all meals during their stay. It is our desire to build on the foundation of doctrine and theology that MTI has already instilled in these men. Unlike MTI, the format and setting for our times together is informal. Our hope

and prayer is that these leaders will be able to take what they are learning within their cohort and apply it directly to their churches, thus beginning their own groups within their sphere of influence. The duration of the cohorts has yet to be decided, although Dennis and I are leaning toward a two-year plan. Since this is a new program, we need to see how things will unfold as we go. Also, it is very difficult to put a definitive time frame on something like discipleship. As we are all aware as it relates to spiritual growth, every person will move at a different pace. We plan on launching at least one new cohort every six months (as spiritually mature leadership allows). Attached is a page from our discipleship handbook that gives a clear picture of our hopes for the group as we begin.

## Our Hopes As We Begin...

The following are some of the things that you need to know and that we hope to accomplish as we begin our discipleship journey together:

1. We want you to know that this is NOT A CLASS. This is not a place where you will be tested and expected to give the correct answer.
2. You will not be rewarded with a certificate or diploma. Many times, men and women will attend classes with the goal of being formally recognized by their community as someone with authority. These same people are often hoping to be finished quickly so that they can receive recognition. The problem with this approach is that they can miss the heart of God because they are too concerned with the completion itself. This is not information for you to learn so that you can quickly be put in the position of “teacher.” We are not in a hurry. We want God to speak to our hearts. This journey has nothing to do with titles and achievements.
3. We are doing more than just passing INFORMATION back and forth to each other. We are believing that we will all experience TRANSFORMATION as we open our HEARTS and MINDS to the teachings of Scripture and the examples of God’s love for humanity.
4. We will WORSHIP together. We will regularly read Scripture, sing, pray, and fast with each other.
5. This is not a place where you should feel intimidated. We all struggle and have strengths and weaknesses. None of us are perfect. We will make sure that we continually remind each other of this truth.
6. We are seeking to create a safe place to go deeper into each other’s lives. This means that we must build trust. Without trust, we will never love each other in the way we are instructed by Scripture.
7. Along with safety comes the charge to be transparent with each other. If we are to really grow, then we will have to be honest with each other, even when it is hard.
8. We will uphold confidentiality. We need to trust and believe that none of us will take information that is shared in this group and use it against another person. We must trust that anything that is shared in this group as confidential will never be discussed with others outside of the group unless the person sharing has given permission to do so.
9. We will all be encouraged to speak and act in humility. None of us have all of the correct answers. We do not need to act like we do. We are all learners. We all make mistakes. We will seek to apologize quickly and ask for forgiveness if we hurt each other in any way.
10. We want to always encourage each other not only to read and study the Scriptures, but to OBEY what they say. Obedience will always be a core principle in everything we do. It is not enough to only discuss the Scriptures. How will obedience be seen in your life every day?
11. Self-reflection is encouraged and necessary. You will continually be asked to look at your own life while on this journey. How are the things we are discussing affecting you personally?
12. We will take our time. Real discipleship cannot be rushed.
13. Application-You will be encouraged to apply what we discuss to your life directly. You will also be encouraged to go into your church and community with the ways in which you are being challenged and changed. How will what you are learning be seen in the way you think and act every day?

## Messiah Theological Institute (Dennis Okoth)

The year 2015 began with lots of excitement at the MTI Campus. We had just graduated over 40 students in November 2014. In January, we were able to recruit five new students for the STS (scholarship) program. We have also completed the New Catalogue draft and it is ready for printing. The Onalaska Scholarship is still solid with the resolve of our brothers to help train more Evangelists through MTI extending beyond the Tororo region. We appreciate the visits that brother Jack Sauls makes to reorient himself with what is going on here on the ground.



The new MTI building is in its final stages is just about ready for us to use. We only have some light construction and furniture to purchase. We are confident that these funds will become available shortly. We must thank the Church at Quaker Avenue for the sacrifice they made on our behalf to make this need become a reality. This is a beautiful building that will bless our students for years to come.



We also began the year with the challenge of how to sustain the training of the deaf students in our MTI program. Funding for this stalled a few years ago, but we are determined to see the few that had not finished graduate before we terminate the program. The need for the Deputy Principal is still there. Due to the expansion of the Mission work, we need

assistants on full time basis to cater for the MTI and AOP ministries. Jill Robinson has stepped in to help shed off some workload in the office, and that is commendable. We wish we had more helping hands.

## Mbale Church of Christ (Daryl Bates)

The Mbale Church of Christ was established around 1995. In many ways it serves as a “mother” or model church to the hundreds of rural churches within NTCC. It currently averages 170 in attendance on Sunday mornings, about half of whom are children and youth. This is reflective of the population in general in Uganda.

There are no appointed elders in the church. MCC is currently led by a leadership team consisting of two missionaries (JP Robinson and Daryl Bates) and four Africans (Dennis Okoth from Kenya, Henry Buregea from Congo, and Patrick Chebet and David Iyakia, who are both Ugandan). In July 2014, Daryl Bates was confirmed as the lead coordinator for this team. Weekly preaching is shared primarily among these men.



There has been some significant conflict within MCC in recent years that have hampered growth and forward movement of the church. Certain member families in particular have had differences and misunderstandings with the leadership (past and present) that are still ongoing. Some church leaders have been taken to the police and to the offices of local government officials by these members in an attempt to have them reprimanded or even forced out of the country, though to no avail. The response of the leadership team has been to try to persuade those with issues to deal with them face to face with the leaders, through discussion and prayer. We believe there has been some progress in resolving the tensions, though we also more effort and prayer will be needed. We are committed to sorting through these and other needs through a congregation-wide focus on deeper discipleship to Christ.



Despite the challenges, the core of the MCC membership consists of committed believers who are dedicated to serving Christ and his church. We have had 6 baptisms in the past 9 months. There are visitors every week. Worship is vibrant and weekly teaching is well grounded and encouraging. We are excited by what the Lord has done in the past and will do in the future at MCC.

We believe that for the health and growth of MCC moving forward, there needs to be an intentional shift in focus toward deeper

discipleship. We believe this is both Biblical and crucial. Much of the unrest that we have experienced can be attributed to lack of maturity and wrongheaded perceptions about what it means to follow Jesus. Dennis and JP have already begun to meet with leaders of rural churches for the purpose of modeling life-on-life discipleship. We as a leadership at MCC wholeheartedly agree that this is needed in the Mbale church as well. Our goal is to begin among ourselves as a leadership team, starting in April 2015, and meeting twice a month for the next year or two and working through discipleship material which JP has adapted and developed. The initial emphasis will be on applying the teaching, going deeper as followers of Jesus ourselves.

By October 2015, we plan to begin developing small groups, which will initially be led by members of the leadership team. We want to see the majority of MCC members involved in a small group in order to enhance spiritual maturity, build healthy relationships, and help facilitate shepherding within the MCC family. As far as possible, future teachers and leaders will be identified and cultivated in the context of these small groups. Existing and new members will be encouraged to attend a membership class, sign a membership covenant, and participate in a small group.

There are two men who have faithfully served as volunteer ministers for MCC, David Iyakia and Sammy Wamalwa, whom we will begin to equip this year with accredited training. David assists in the area of pulpit ministry and pastoral care, and Sammy leads our children's ministry.

### SEW Ministry (Jill Robinson)

The SEW Ministry (Sewing and Evangelism for Women) has thrived in 2014. We currently have over 70 women registered with our ministry. We meet twice per week



and our average attendance is between 30 and 40 women. During each meeting the women work on their sewing skills, ranging from beginner to advanced. This past year, we participated in two service projects. We sewed waterproof diaper covers for babies with spina bifida and delivered them to patients at Cure Hospital. We also sewed patchwork baby blankets and delivered them to Mbale

Regional Hospital at Christmas time. Our women were not only able to improve their skills, but they were also given the chance to give back to their communities. During each meeting, we also have a Bible lesson. This year we reviewed Christian basics. We have had many women who are new to the program and have not heard these teachings before. Also, about half of our women come from Muslim backgrounds. At



the end of our teaching series, many expressed interest in learning more and two women were baptized. Praise the Lord! There are three women who teach sewing and tailoring skills: Mary Kayinza, Rebecca Soita and Beatrice Aupat.



In 2015, our focus will be on discipleship. I have begun walking through our discipleship journey with Mary, Rebecca and Beatrice. I am excited about the possibilities these three women hold. I believe that in time, they will be able to start small discipleship groups among the women who attend our ministry. For our service project this past term, our ladies made uniforms for young men and women who are residents at Ramand Home. This is a local youth prison located near Mbale Church of Christ. As we delivered these uniforms and spoke with the youth, we were able to show the love of God in a tangible way.

### National Youth Conference (J.P. Robinson)

The 2014 national youth conference saw 220 youth in attendance. The theme of the conference was “We Shine” and the speakers concentrated on teachings that encouraged young people in our communities with the various ways in which they can



shine for Christ. Choirs from churches of Christ all over Uganda presented songs and there were even Christian artists who performed original music for the crowd of enthusiastic youth in the evening hours. The youth ministry at Harpeth Christian Church raised funds and made it possible for every youth in attendance to receive a conference themed t-shirt. This

was the first time this had happened and everyone was really excited and encouraged by the opportunity. We closed the conference with a sweet time of praise and worship and 5 youth made decisions for Christ and were baptized.

## Wish List

Like most missions, of course we have a wish list. There will always be programs that we cannot accomplish and people that we cannot help because of lack of funds. We recently met as a team to discuss what we would wish for if money were not an object. There were big dreams and small dreams. We decided to share them with you in case God lays it on your heart to help in one of these areas:

- Bibles. We currently put money every month towards Bibles but this is an area that we would like to see increase. Without Bibles, we cannot disciple men and women to become more like Christ. We dream of putting Bibles in the hands of anyone who wants one. We would like to be able to bring more Bibles on each rural church visit that we make. We would like to have Bibles available at MCC for Bible class and during the sermon. We would like to give Bibles to the ladies in the SEW ministry.
- MTI Scholarships. It costs \$350 to scholarship one student to attend MTI. We would love to see more scholarships available to men and women who want to pursue this education.
- Discipleship Scholarships. Each discipleship cohort monthly meeting costs about \$200. We do have money designated for discipleship, but as we add more meetings, we will not have enough funds to provide transportation and food for these men and women.
- MCC Seating. Currently we have benches that we use for seating at MCC. Volunteers lovingly constructed these, but after years of use and moving them around, they are wearing out. For ease of cleaning and grouping, we desire to purchase chairs for MCC for the sanctuary.
- Communion Supplies. We are committed to instructing rural churches in the importance of partaking in the Lord's Supper on a regular basis. One way that we can encourage them is by providing communion trays and cups.
- MCC Ministry Building. This is our most costly dream. We would love to be able to convert our current structure that is made from shipping containers into a more solid building. We would use this building to house the SEW ministry and children's ministry. We have not had plans drawn up at this time, but would like to see this happen in the next few years.

## Looking Forward

It's hard to believe that we are already a quarter of the way through 2015. There is so much that we hope to accomplish. Here are the areas where we will be focusing during the next nine months:

**Discipleship:** Life on life discipleship is permeating every area of our mission. The response from staff, pastors, leaders and other nationals has been overwhelming. They are excited to go deeper with one another and grow in the Lord.

**Communication:** We are committed to increasing our communication with you, our partners. You are such an integral part of our ministry, that it is important for you to know what is going on. We plan to continue with impact reports, financial reports, website updates and social media. Please contact us any time you have a question or concern.

**Finances:** Our goal is to review our financial status and bookkeeping system in the coming year. We want to be good stewards of the money that is entrusted to us. We also want to be transparent as to how that money is being used. Financial reports will be available for review in the near future.

**Organization:** We would like to become more efficient in the way the mission is organized and run. We are hoping to develop policies that reflect our current ministry goals. We are also working to renew and secure land deeds and leases.

## We Appreciate Your Help

We are so grateful for all of the churches and individuals that partner with us to accomplish this work here in Uganda. Without you, we would not have these ministries. According to Neal Pirolo "Those who go and those who serve as senders merge their callings and talents and giftings to form the cross-cultural outreach team. All are equally important. All are vitally involved in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. All are dynamically integrated and moving toward the same goal." (*Serving as Senders* by Neal Pirolo) Thank you for being our senders.