

An Update from the Dunkard Brethren Mission in Kenya

The Church in Chesubet

The small village of Chesubet lies high up in the mountains and is situated east of the mission compound. The fertile land of this area produces maize, beans, potatoes, and other crops. The scenic beauty of the landscape reflects the greatness of the God who created it. Some views extend for miles and miles. The altitude affects the climate, which is much colder than one would expect of land near the equator. Most people in this area make their living from agriculture. Other opportunities to generate income are few.

Chesubet and the surrounding area saw much violence in early 2008 due to strife over the Presidential election. This rekindled animosity among the various tribes of people. Houses were burned, personal property was stolen, and some were killed. These frightening times caused people to flee to other areas. Some who remained slept in the bush instead of their homes because they felt safer there. There was little that could be done to stop the mobs from their evil deeds. Many of the thieves and vandals were neighbors of the victims. Thankfully, the violence has ceased. To this day, much distrust remains. Recently, police have been sweeping the area and punishing some of the criminals.

Understanding these recent events helps one appreciate the faith and courage of the Christians in the Chesubet area. Through perilous times, they have continued to follow Jesus Christ. The Chesubet church is made up of people of all age groups and from different tribes. Some walk very long distances to the church building. They use Swahili in the worship meetings. Most of these people speak at least two languages fluently. When the missionaries are present, an interpreter for English is also used. This church shows warm hos-

pitality. Due to the distance from the mission, they prepare a light lunch for the missionaries and their companions following Sunday worship. During home visits recently, most families offered chai (hot tea with milk) and/or some kind of food to the servants of God.

Pastor Joseph Okemo leads this church. He was chosen by the congregation 9 years ago after the previous pastor fell into sin. He has developed a team of men in the church who assist him in teaching, visitation, and working through issues. These men are growing spiritually because of their teamwork. Joseph's attention to detail and organizational skill help him to fulfill his responsibilities well.

Like all churches, this congregation faces different challenges. Some of the single people have begun living together instead of getting married. This common practice in Kenya violates God's plan for marriage. While many such couples stay together, the lack of real commitment causes various problems. The church needs wisdom and diligence in preventing and rectifying this problem. Another challenge is the ability of the people to provide for their own needs. Every year, the mission continues to supply food, pay medical bills, and meet other expenses. While the mission wants to help the people in our churches, the best help is teaching people who are able how they can work and manage their resources to meet their own needs. Much can be done in this area. On the positive side, one brother recently offered land, seed, and fertilizer to the youth of this church so that they could work to provide for the expenses of the Youth Conference. The youth embraced this challenging opportunity. Time will show us how successful this approach is.

The future for this church shows much promise. Wisdom is needed for calling additional leaders and dealing with various challenges. Outreach opportunities are many.

"The future for this church shows much promise. Wisdom is needed for calling additional leaders and dealing with various challenges."

Brother Steve Clapper



The Joseph Okemo Family



Celestine
and Joseph
Okemo

Joseph Okemo and his wife Celestine have 5 children (Joyce [married to Kennedy Shavir], Vitalis, Jacinta, Marcy, and Esther) and one grandchild (Lydia). Joseph is the pastor of the Chesubet Dunkard Brethren Church. His frequent smile displays the joy of the Lord. Celestine helps Joseph in many ways. She serves faithfully in the home and partners with her husband in his ministry. She is his confidant and adviser. Celestine also helps to teach the sisters in the church.

Some family history reveals their character and work ethic. Previously, Joseph worked in the city of Eldoret for a company making roofing tiles. He left that job because he could not provide adequately for his family, and they moved to Chesubet. The first two years, Joseph farmed for a landowner in exchange for a place to live and seed, fertilizer, and 1 acre to farm for his own family. After that, they were broke, and Celestine was pregnant. They began renting to own 1 ¼ acres and built a house out of paper. After a year, they built a small mud house with a thatched roof. Through hard work and careful spending, they were able to complete the purchase of the land in 3 years.

They started saving for iron roofing sheets. When ready, they built a bigger mud house with an iron roof. Eventually, they were able to buy a cow. Now, they are in the process of buying additional land. Little by little, God has blessed this family and met their needs. Joseph continues to farm beans and maize (corn). They continue to dig and weed for others. They also sell some milk.

During the clashes in early 2008, some of their neighbors planned to steal all of their possessions under cover of darkness [John 3:19]. But one of the group, who was drunk, alerted Joseph of the theft just before it was to occur. The Okemos began removing things from the house to hide them elsewhere. After half an hour, the thieves came. The drunkard told them you cannot steal here because it is the pastor's house. He began to call out the names of the thieves. The mob left with nothing. After that experience, the Okemos began sleeping in the bush near the river instead of in their home. They slept there for about 3 weeks.

Some time later, another group of thieves came and stole the Okemos' cow and calf. Joseph shared this with the church on Sunday, and the people began to pray. After a few hours, Joseph received a phone call that the cattle had returned on their own. Because of the continual threat of theft, Joseph rented a room in a nearby village to store his possessions until the danger was past. During these frightening times, Celestine fell sick with ulcers, swelling, and other problems. She is still recovering from the last of these ailments.

During the clashes, the Okemos and others were gripped by fear. Chaos and lawlessness gave birth to every

form of iniquity. But they called out to God for his help. God answered their prayers. In the worst of times, God is able to show himself strong to those who trust in him. Psalm 18:2-3 "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."

Joseph appreciates the respect that his congregation gives to him and his family. He gives God the credit for helping him through many different experiences. He is an able administrator. His humility allows him to work well with his church. He also serves as chairman of the Kenya Mission Board (the leadership group comprised of the ministers and missionaries). The Lord's work has ups and downs. Discouragement sometimes comes through people and circumstances. The ministry brings various challenges and difficulties, but God continues to provide grace.

Joseph knows by experience the importance of standing firm as a believer in Jesus Christ. Joseph and Celestine have experienced persecution from some family members because they refused to compromise the Scriptures. Some of these conflicts have been over cultural practices which go against the Bible. Facing opposition and rejection from your own flesh and blood is a great trial. Though some relationships have been damaged, God has provided other brothers and sisters in the church to take their place. Luke 18:29-30 "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

Celestine has had problems in the past few months with an infection that led to huge swelling in her cheek. Some viewed this ailment as coming from a witch doctor. Those people instructed the Okemos to follow certain steps to remove the spell. They refused. After surgery and later the removal of a tooth, Celestine has improved greatly. She still has difficulty with tightness in her jaw.

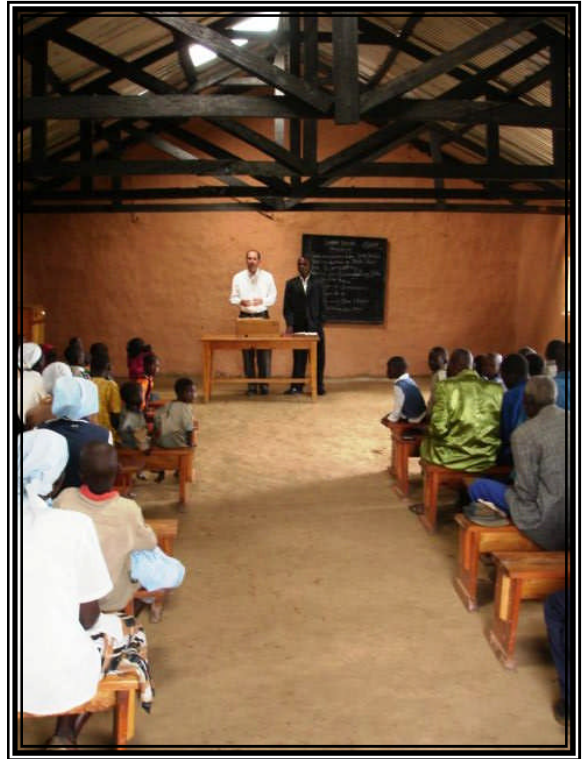
This family has seen God work in many ways. You can pray that Joseph will continue to be faithful in the ministry and have wisdom for the issues and decisions to come. Though much better, Celestine needs prayer for complete healing in her body.

Brothers Steve Clapper and Joseph Okemo

John 3:19

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

*Sunday Morning Service
at Chesubet
(attendance around 75)*



Chesubet Hillside



Self-Support

It has been stated "that the purpose of missions is the development of churches which are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating." Self-support is further defined as "support by oneself or itself." The missionaries and the African Mission Board believe this is a worthy goal and have realized the need to exercise wisdom and discretion in how we respond to the various financial and other requests that are presented to us. In making decisions, we seek counsel from the national ministers as well as draw on the collective experience of past decisions. We are intent on developing the ability of individuals to support themselves and on teaching reliance on God to meet the needs that arise.

We would like to ask you as friends and supporters of the church in Kenya to join us in this goal. If you receive a request for assistance from a person or church in Kenya, please check with the mission staff or the African Mission Board before you decide how to respond. We understand that there are appropriate times and ways to help our brothers and sisters in the church, but it can be hard to discern the real need if you are not familiar with the situation. Well meant gifts, especially of money, can sometimes cause further difficulty for the person and/or the church. Often, advice or encouragement is a better long term way to help. Thank you for your cooperation in developing a self-supporting people and church.

Brother Ray Noecker

Opportunity

A man named Gregory once came to the mission and asked for a gift of iron sheets for the roof of his house. This man had a very small income and many other wants. His real need was a job. Fortunately, a large building project in town gave him an opportunity. For several months now, Gregory has faithfully continued with his work and is fulfilling his responsibilities as the head of his home. In this case, opportunity was the best gift.

Brother Steve Clapper

Visitors to the Mission: Renae, Laura, and Marie

On November 11th, Marie Sines (Ray Noecker's mother), Laura Newcomer, and Renae Weaver arrived in Nairobi. After a good night of sleep at the Mennonite guest house, we enjoyed getting to know the Noecker family as we traveled to the mission compound.

The Clappers' smiling faces greeted us as they welcomed us into their home for the next four weeks. Our visit with them gave us the opportunity of many new experiences. We were welcomed, and they did an excellent job of introducing us to the culture here in Kenya.

We had the opportunity to visit each of the four congregations. It was a privilege to teach Sunday school to the children at two of the churches. The Lord really helped us with this challenge, and it went very well. An encouraging verse during this time was "For the Lord shall be thy confidence" Proverbs 3:26a. The interpreters did a great job,

but singing any of our new songs was a bit complicated. The smiling faces of the children were rewarding. Visiting after the services was somewhat awkward with the language barrier.

School with the Clapper and Noecker girls was a daily part of our schedule. They were great students, and we enjoyed games with them at recess. The extra Bible lessons and weekly art class were a nice break in the routine.

We had the privilege to visit in two homes of the people here. They both displayed excellent hospitality and were kind to show us around their compounds. We learned about and saw some new plants in their beautiful flower beds. We were also served chai—a hot, milky tea.

We are thankful that we had the opportunity to witness a native wedding. Although quite different from American customs, there were similarities nonethe-

less. One of the differences was eating rice with our fingers. Also, it was quite amusing to watch them bringing the cows into the church yard as gifts for the bride and groom.

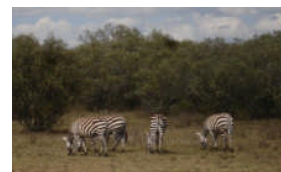
It was a blessing to be able to visit the Clappers here and get to know the Noecker family. We want to thank them for their hospitality and our friends who kept us in their prayers. We enjoyed our stay and thank the Lord for the many things we learned which we will never forget.

Laura Newcomer and
Renae Weaver



Look for this newsletter on the web!

www.dunkardbrethrenchurch.com



Contact Information:

Dunkard Brethren Mission
P.O. Box 658
Kapenguria, Kenya 30600
East Africa

Phone: 011-254-546-2043

Clapper's email:
clappernews@hotmail.com
Noecker's email:
eph2.10@swiftkenya.com

Contribution Information:

If you would like to contribute to the Dunkard Brethren Mission in Kenya, please make your check payable to "African Mission Board" and send it to:

African Mission Board
c/o Jeremiah Johnson
1773 N 136th Avenue
Hart, MI 49420

Receiving Information:

If you desire to receive this newsletter, contact Brother Steve Clapper at
clappernews@hotmail.com

If your congregation would like to receive a printed version of this newsletter, contact Sister Lorraine Lorenz at
raeofhopePsa71.5@comcast.net