

Dear Friends and Prayer Partners,

Thank you so much for praying for the church planting workshops that Mark and I have been having up in the Mount Kenya Region. I believe that your prayers have been effective. I want to give you a quick look at how things have been going.

Remember that these workshop are to help the individual pastors understand how to prepare his or her church for planting a "daughter" church. We teach planning, member involvement, organizing for action, resource development, etc.

So far we have held three "blocks" of workshops. One for the Presbyterian Church (PCEA), one for the Anglican Church (ACK), and one for the Assemblies of God Church (KAG). Logistically, we have to divide each Church's geographical area into smaller portions and then hold a workshop in each smaller portion. The geographical portion size is based on the travel distance that each participating pastor has in order to get to the workshop. Most pastors here do not have cars and must travel by public means, the cost being their own. Some must travel from as far as 50 miles away.

The workshop is a 2-day workshop. But what we usually do is to hold only the first day of the workshop and then allow the participants to tell us when they want us to return for the second day. Normally, we come back a month or so later to finish the 2nd day. Part of the reason for this is to keep the expenses low. If we held the workshop two days running, there would be lodging costs for the participants as well as additional food costs for supper and breakfast. As it is, we only have to be concerned with a single lunch in the middle of the day with no other costs.

For a single denomination, we will hold three days of first-day workshops, each workshop in a different location. That means, so far, we have held 9 days of workshops. The schedule has been rigorous as we have to travel about 150 miles from Nairobi to get to the Mount Kenya Region each time we go for a different denomination. So far we have totalled about 200 participants in these workshops.

"But," you say, "what difference is it making?" We have had the definite impression that many of the discussions coming out of these workshops were eye-openers for many of the pastors. In America, what has now become a cliché is the term "paradigm shift." Well, a paradigm shift is exactly what these workshops seem to be sparking. The old denominational model of planting a new church only "upon request" from a distant member seems to be giving way to the proposal of "taking initiative" to discover new places that need a church. The workshops help participants to see the target in a much more broad and fresh way. We talk about HIV churches and street-people churches and deaf churches and business-people churches. We talk about church services during the week and churches in peoples' homes. All of this has been received with enthusiasm. The cookie-cutter church model brought by the early missionaries seems to be something that the workshop participants are willing to reconsider.

Another dynamic is that the denominational leaders are together with the pastors in these workshops. Consequently, when the leaders sense an enthusiasm surging through the local pastors, they seem to be much more inclined to "get onboard" than if Mark and I tried to convince them of the same thing in an office setting. Likewise, when a local pastor sees and hears his denominational leader seeming to be inspired by a new idea, he or she is much more inclined to "perk up" and not miss out on what may be the beginning of a new denominational direction. The dynamics in these workshops have been a true blessing.

We will continue to build valuable relationships with Bishops, Moderators, and Overseers in the Mount Kenya Region as well as with hundreds of local pastors. The progress of church planting in the region will likely remain stagnate without these good relationships. Please pray for our effectiveness in this area.

We will be returning to the Mount Kenya Region in two days to hold workshops with the Pentecostal Church (EAPC) and with another denomination known as Deliverance Church. We are still in the planning stages with the Methodist Church there. November is beginning to fill with a full schedule of 2nd-day workshops.

Thank you so much for your prayers -- for the workshops, for the participants, and for Mark and me (Note: Unlike me, Mark has a wife and family whom he leaves each time we make a trip away from Nairobi for 2 or 3 days -- a special prayer need)

Yours in Christ, Jeff Osborne