

Minister's Message – August 2012

Safari

In June/July I was privileged to spend time in the Reformed Bible College (RBC) in Mwingi, Kenya. I later travelled with Elizabeth to see friends from our days in India. He (Kibe) and his wife (Mariam) lecture in Egerton University at Njoro. I supervised his postgraduate studies in Allahabad. He married an Indian girl who was in the same Christian fellowship at the college in Allahabad. I had visited them back in 1997, but Elizabeth had not seen them since their marriage in India. They are involved in outreach on the campus; we went to church with them. Kibe took us to a tea estate and factory in the highlands, and also to a wildlife park to see giraffe, zebra, buffalo, baboons and a rhino.

At the Bible College I taught for a brief time. How did I come to go to this place? Last year David Bosanquet, a former member of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), came to our reformed minister's fellowship with a pastor from the Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) in Kenya. David sent out news about this church and the RBC where he stayed.

In previous visits to Kenya I had contacted CMS and AIM missionaries but had no contact with Presbyterians. It so happens that PCEA is a large church. On the roads we travelled we saw many signs to PCEA churches. But this church has departed from the Reformed faith. The IPC holds to the Westminster Confession of Faith. Its background is in the Bible Presbyterian church of America – at least within the Mwingi area where there is a large church, a Bible school, and also a hospital which is now run by the government.

After meeting with David in Wollongong and then contacting the dean of RBC – and after much prayer – arrangements were made for me to give some guest lectures at RBC. I found conditions at the college basic but comfortable. Blackboards are still okay! The students were very eager to learn. Many were already ministering in churches. The third year class had eight students. I had one class – church polity and management – with the whole student body of some 30 students. They were very interested but challenged when asked to draw up a balance sheet of accounts for their own church and then put these onto a spreadsheet. Many had not touched a computer. Not all students were from the IPC. There were three Samburu tribe boys sent by Michael Alley.

Each Lord's Day I went to a different church to preach – David let me drive his Pajero. It was great to meet the pastors and the people, including the children. One Sunday school had 100 children, and the church was filled with 90 worshippers. The people struggled to build a simple brick building with iron roof and windows. Some still had earth floors and no glass in the windows. Services started at 10am with the choir leading the singing. People were still arriving at 11am because they had to walk a long distance from their farms. We finished with lunch at 1pm.

The pastors are given a small salary – the equivalent of \$30 a month in this church that I visited. They have their own farm or shop to supplement this salary, or their wives

worked. The people in this rural area are poor but they are giving to the work of the Lord. There are some 80 IPC congregations in 4 presbyteries across Kenya. It was encouraging to see the calibre and the commitment of the students.

In Nairobi the one IPC church is located on the edge of a large slum of 50,000 people. Dr Mwanthi, a lecturer from RBC, often preaches in this church. He had previously been the principal of Faith Bible College which was located in the Mathare slum. Mwanthi and his wife Sarah welcomed many needy people (including us!) into their Nairobi home, and gave shelter to persecuted converts. Mwanthi plans to visit Australia later this year under the auspices of the RPC and we hope to meet with him again at this time. We continue to pray for the ministry of the RBC in Mwingi, Kenya.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon