Partnership Coordinator for Africa

Presidential Visit with Helen Cameron
To Kenya and Uganda.
13 – 25 May 2024.

In-coming President of MCB, Rev. Dr. Helen Cameron, with
Presiding Bishop Kenya, Isaiah Deye and Secretary of MCK Conference, Bishop, Rev. Dr. John Maromba.

Purpose of Visit:

- To give the in-coming President a chance to reflect on a global Methodist perspective.
- To affirm friendship with the Methodist Church in Kenya and Uganda.
- To learn of the history and ministries of the Methodist Church in East Africa.
- To meet with the Presiding Bishop and Connexional Staff in Nairobi.
- To visit Kawangware School Academy, (Slums of Nairobi).
- To visit Kenya Methodist University in Nairobi to meet staff and students.
- To visit Rural ministries in Hola and Golbanti, Northern Coastal Region.
- To travel to Uganda to visit the rural church communities of the Methodist Church, where many issues related to poverty and social justice are encountered on a daily basis.
- To meet Uganda Synod Staff.
- To meet Mission partners Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman in situ.

Introduction.

The British Methodist Church entered Kenya in 1862 through the work of the then United Methodist Free Church. It started at Ribe station near Mombasa, which was the base from which the mission was launched. Today the Methodist Church is present in 45 counties in Kenya and efforts are being made to cover all 47 counties. MCK also has Synods in Uganda and Tanzania and ministries in Southern Sudan and Congo. The Church has Ministers and church members from almost all the ethnic groups in Kenya.

MCK became autonomous from the British Methodist Church in 1967 when membership stood at about 8,000. The Church has continued to grow steadily and today, with its' Headquarters in Nairobi, the Church has increased to around 1000 congregations, with ministries including a University with satellite campus and a Hospital with a number of dispensaries and clinics. MCK manages over six hundred primary and secondary schools, numerous colleges, three Guest Houses, an Insurance brokers firm, three rural training Centres, and children's homes.

Itinerary.

Monday 13th May 2024	London Heathrow to Nairobi.
Tuesday 14th May 2024	AM Kawangware Academy, Nairobi Kenya Methodist University, Nairobi
Wednesday 15th May 2024	Travel by road from Nairobi to MALINDI 2 nights at Africa House Hotel, Malindi
Thursday 16th May 2024	Visit Hola and Golbanti Circuits.
Friday 17th May 2024	Malindi to Mombasa
Saturday 18th May 2024	Mombasa Cathedral Mombasa to Nairobi
Sunday 19th May 2024	Morning Worship at Kimende, Rift Valley. Depart to Lake Nakuru.
Monday 20th May 2024	AM Lake Nakuru National Park PM Nakuru to Kisumu.
Tuesday 21st May 2024	Visit to Kisumu Synod Kisumu to Jinja, Uganda.
Wednesday 22nd May 2024	Jinja. Jinja town ministries.
Thursday 23rd May 2024	Jinja. Rural ministries.
Friday 24th May 2024	Jinja
Saturday 25th May 2024	Jinja – Entebbe Dep Entebbe

"One of the delights of my presidential year has been arriving at airports in the middle of the night and being greeted by the familiar faces of friends. Revd Dr John Maromba (previously Bishop) now Secretary of the Methodist Church Kenya was a colleague when he studied at the Queens Foundation in Birmongham. It was wonderful to see him again and be blessed by his gentle wisdom once more"

Kawangware Methodist Church and School: Offering hope in the slums of Nairobi.

A place where everybody is somebody." This sign in the Kawangware Church and School compound in the slums of Nairobi in many ways summed up the inspiring and humbling visit of the then President-Designate of the Methodist Church in Britain, Helen Cameron's visit to the Methodist Church in Kenya and Uganda.

Kawangware slum School Academy. Nairobi.

In 1996, the women of the small Methodist congregation in Kawangware slum started a feeding programme in the Church on a Sunday for some of the most needy children in the community. This developed quickly into a kindergarten and a few years' later, after fundraising for a couple of classrooms, the mothers managed to register a Primary School. The Primary School, which serves children from the slum, now has 108 children on roll, 60 of whom can only afford to pay for a lunch levy. But despite the

financial challenges, the Church is determined to continue to provide education and lunch for the most vulnerable children in its' midst.

Whilst visiting the school, we were treated to a medley of Christian songs from the children, who sang songs of thanksgiving to God for the gift of His love and His presence.

Afterwards, walking through the narrow alleys of the slums to visit a few families supported by the Church, we met one young mother who was struggling to provide for her 7 children (3 sets of twins and a young baby) by selling vegetables. Her husband had died in an accident. Her greatest desire was that her children might get an education and so have hope of a better life. Three of her children were being educated at the school. "I thank God," she said, "that the Methodist Church in Kawangware is offering the hope of a better life for my children."

As we walked through the slum, we received warm smiles from passers-by in the narrow alleys and were invited into a number of the shacks. We were thanked profusely for visiting and witnessing the reality of life for so many.

This is one of the many ministries run by the Methodist Church in Kenya, which has for years been supported by the World Mission Fund. This visit – like all the others I have made to partner church schools - raised questions for us as we consider our on-going relationship with the global Church:

- How can we continue learn from and continue to support our partners in the Education sector in ways that go beyond funding?
- We learned that a school uniform costs $20 in Kenya and is required for a child to attend school. In the slums, this prevents many children from doing so, thus denying them a future. Are there ways/networks we can use to assist with this need?
- Can we encourage more school twinning between Methodist schools to mutually enhance children's education and global awareness?
- Is there online connectivity potential for both staff and pupils in developing mutual relations, understanding and educational opportunity?

"This was an overwhelming part of the visit. There was so much loving practical care being offered by the church in this location but so much need to be addressed. As we left the slum area and the saints of God on the ground in that community and turned a corner we were immediately in a very affluent suburb of Nairobi and the proximity og such wealth and privilege immediately adjacent to such poverty was disturbing".

Kenya Methodist University.

It was a privilege to meet with the Chancellor and Trustees of Kenya Methodist University at their Nairobi Campus.

Kenya Methodist University is a chartered, private Christian University, founded in 1984 and sponsored by the Methodist Church in Kenya. It has an international reputation offering high quality education that

seeks to transform society based on Christian principles and has a close relationship with Wesley House, Cambridge. As well as teaching, the University excels in the fields of research, community service and consultancy. There are currently 4000 students on the campus in Meru and a further 4000 students at the campus in Nairobi, studying from the 84 courses offered. Faculties include the Business School, Education and Social Sciences, Medicine and Health Sciences, and Science and Technology, offering courses ranging from certificates and diplomas through to Bachelors, Masters and PhD degrees.
The Methodist Church in Britain have offered a number of Solidarity Grants to the University, most recently to equip a new Nurses Training facility thus making a substantial contribution to Health Training opportunities in Kenya.

With Trustees of Kenya Methodist University.

Kenya Methodist University Science Laboratory, Nairobi.

During the visit to Kenya Methodist University, the following requests were made:

- To explore opportunities for Student Exchange with Britain.
- To encourage British doctors and professors to visit and teach at the University.
- To be put in touch with national and/or international medical charities/NGOs that might help fund specific aspects of the University's work, particularly in the medical field.

" to be among fellow adult educators was a privilege and the staff were impressive with their ambition for improving their facilities and the opportunities they could offer to more students."

Tana River Valley Coastal Region: Continuing a historic ministry in the face of devastating floods in rural Kenya.

In 1862, the British Missionary, Thomas Wakefield, arrived in Mombasa and established the Methodist Church in Kenya. Through the work of European Missionaries and African converts and through much sacrifice, the Church spread quite quickly. In the 1870s, John and Annie Houghton joined Wakefield and set off by Steamship up the Tana River in the coastal region north of Mombasa, and established the first Methodist Church at Golbanti.

It was in this Church that Rev. Dr. Helen Cameron was welcomed by members of the Circuit after a 14 hour drive from Nairobi to Malindi the previous day. As 'children' of the Methodist Church in Britain, the local people were overjoyed to see us. "You are the first Europeans to visit us for years," they said. They spoke with great pride of their history being amongst the earliest Methodist presence in East Africa. Even before we visited the Church, they had proudly taken us to pray at the simple graves of John and Annie Houghton. John and Annie had managed to establish a successful Methodist community in Golbanti but sadly, after only a short time in post, they were murdered by cattle raiders. Today, like all the missionaries who helped establish Methodism in Africa, they are remembered with great respect by the local people.

At the grace of John & Annie Houghton. Golbanti Church. Hola Church.

Today, the Methodist churches that serve the people of the Tana River Valley – one of the most isolated and poorest regions of the country - are growing. As we met and prayed with Church members, they danced and sang with great joy, thanking us for being the first British visitors to their Circuit and telling us that our visit would be remembered for many years to come. A few weeks before our visit, heavy rains had caused devastating floods along the river valley and over 40,000 people had been displaced. These added to the tens of thousands who had been displaced by the previous floods that happened in 2023. Their tented camps line the main road to Malindi for many miles. These floods are a direct consequence of Climate Change which is having a catastrophic impact on the environmental and human landscape across Africa. Yet, despite the huge challenges, the Church is responding. And last month, the World Mission Fund sent a grant of £20,000 to help with the relief efforts undertaken by the Relief and Development Committee of the Methodist Church in Kenya in the Tana River Valley.

When the Methodist Church in Kenya received our grant, they responded:
"The Methodist church in Kenya takes this opportunity to sincerely thank the Methodist church in Britain on behalf of all the floods beneficiaries who received relief food from the donation received from the Methodist church in Britain. It went a long way towards helping the most vulnerable floods victims in Tana River Garisa and Wajir counties."

Relief food was distributed to 4680 beneficiaries {1,170 households} within the three counties of Tana River, Garissa and Wajir. Local Methodists worked with community leaders to identify the most affected vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, the aged, those with terminal illnesses, young mothers and the poorest in the areas most affected by the severe flooding. Items distributed included maize, beans, soya corn blend for porridge salt, soap, and cooking oil.

Many community members and chiefs said that it was the first time that they had ever received so many items and in such large quantities. Many of the beneficiaries had not eaten for days and many were Muslim and were openly thankful to the Methodist Church in Kenya for sourcing this support.

Golbanti Village. Camps for Floods Displaced persons.

One elderly woman said that for the last three weeks she had only been able to feed her three grandchildren one meal every two days because she was not sure where to get any other food.
All her farm crops and properties had been swept away by the floods. Tears flowed down her cheeks as she thanked the Methodist church for providing her with enough food for her family.

Despite these challenges, the Methodist members in the Tana Valley continue to serve their communities. They are also seeking to build new churches to accommodate growing numbers. They are indeed inspiring witnesses to faith, perseverance and endurance and they remain faithful to the Methodist heritage that they have received.

"Meeting these communities just after they had lost so much in the devastation caused by the floods was a real reminder of how fragile life is for the most vulnerable. It was those who had least who were made even more vulnerable by the devastating floods. The generous hospitality we were offered on our visit was a very great gift. It mattered a great deal in these communities that we had travelled to see them and listen to their stories"

Sunday Worship in Kimende

On Sunday, Helen was invited to preach at the Methodist Church in Kimende, a small but busy market town about 50km north-west of Nairobi on the main highway up the Rift Valley towards Uganda. As such, it was a good example of a typical Methodist Church outside the urban areas. Like many Methodist Churches and reflecting Methodism's priority to serve the marginalised, the Church is situated in a poorer area of town. The congregation was about 100 people and the service was 'shortened' to a mere 2 hours to allow for our travelling commitments, Like many other Churches in Kenya, the service showed strong Pentecostal influences in both style and theology with plenty of vibrant singing and dancing. We were warmly welcomed and fed and Helen's sermon was deeply appreciated.

Kisumu Synod. Western Kenya. Providing Health and Education in Rural Kenya.

"Thank you for coming to visit us." It is one of the most commonly heard phrases during visits to partner churches, particularly in remoter areas and was repeated everywhere we went. It is difficult to overstate how highly our historic partnership and friendship with global partners are valued.

During Helen Cameron's Presidential visit to Kenya and Uganda, we visited the Kisumu Synod in Western Kenya - the largest Synod in the country. Here, in a vast rural area inhabited by 23% of the population of Kenya and which borders Lake Victoria and Uganda, the Methodist Synod comprises 30,000 members spread across 68 churches/societies in 12 circuits. In one of those Circuits, we visited the only Health Centre in the area and a High School at Ugunja. The Clinic, established in 2001, is the only Methodist hospital in western Kenya and provides both preventative and Community Health Care services. However, resources are limited and conditions are basic. There is a shortage of beds, a shortage of basic drugs and medical equipment and a shortage of staff. The maternity unit delivers a high number of babies, but the maternity facilities are minimal. There is a diagnostic centre which is vital for treatment and prevention of diseases but equipment is limited and it frequently malfunctions. Despite all of this, the 16 staff show an admirable level of dedication and commitment to their work and the care of patients and the clinic is clearly popular. Without the government funding contribution that is provided, it is unlikely that the Clinic would be able to provide the kind of services which it does. And as is the case with many health facilities around Africa, without the provision of the Methodist Church, the clinic would not exist at all.

Ugunja Clinic Consultation Room. Delivery Room. Clinic Registration.

From the clinic, we drove to the local Methodist Secondary School, one of the most significant Methodist educational institutions in western Kenya. Approaching the school, we were met by all 580 pupils lined up on either side of the road singing songs of greeting, eager to welcome us and to develop educational links with schools in the UK.

In Kenya, 43% of the population are under 15 and 78% of the population are under the age of 34. There is a huge problem (as in many countries in Africa) with extremely high unemployment. The problem is particularly acute in Western Kenya which is a rural region, where young people are at high risk of being radicalised and being drawn into a life of crime, or even being offered money by extremist groups to join militant groups committing violence against institutions.

According to the 2022 data published by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, young people aged below 29 years, both Secondary School and College Graduates, are the hardest hit by unemployment. One of the consequences of this is that Kenya has recently faced weeks of sometimes violent unrest (much of it by young people) caused by the lack of opportunity for ordinary people, and corruption amongst political leaders. While the ongoing agitation has literally changed the political discourse, there is great concern that it could get out of hand and lead to a breakdown of law.

Welcome at Ugunja Methodist High School. Ugunja Methodist Church.

The leadership at the Methodist School have therefore proposed to assemble 75 young people for a two–day non-boarding meeting to explore the following:

- Locally available business opportunities and how the youth can access them and benefit from them.
- Online money-making opportunities that the youth can engage in using their smartphones and at the comfort of their homes.
- How to push for good governance through non-violent means.
- Positive thinking for better mental health.

This is a unique initiative which has received warm support from the local government.
Our visit to the Kisumu Synod raised the following questions:

- What connections can we make between British Methodist Schools and those Methodist schools run by our global partners?
- Can we/how do we encourage exchanges – of staff/of pupils?
- What online mutual learning opportunities might be possible with the widespread use of modern technology?

Christian Medical Institutions across Africa struggle to fund both staff and facilities. Challenges include: Many Institutions are old (often established by missionaries up to 100 years ago) and so building maintenance is ongoing and costly; hospital equipment is extremely expensive; Churches find it hard to pay staff a salary equivalent to State levels and therefore staff retention is a constant struggle.

- Can we help identify human and financial resources to support medical facilities run by our international partners? (As partners, 'pointing the way' to bodies that may be able to help?)
- Requests for exchanges (both ways) are often made – so that staff can learn from international colleagues. Are there ways in which such exchanges can be facilitated?
- Is it possible to promote more online encounter/learning opportunities for those with medical skills?

- ***"Visiting the Western Synod made my own experience of a large British District fade into insignificance. This Synod covers a huge area, and the work undertaken is of the highest standard even when limited by few resources. I pray that a links between one of our British Methodist Schools and the school in Kisumu is possible because there is so much energy and desire for partnership there".***

Uganda

Introduction

The Methodist Church in Uganda was started by Rev. Solomon Mwange in 1985. He was a convert from a Muslim family and attended Theological Seminary in Kentucky, USA. The Church was registered in 1986 to come under the Methodist Church in Kenya. Rev. Mwange had wished to be associated with UMC but the nearest UMC body was in Congo but for geographical reasons, it was decided that it was much more appropriate for the new Church to come under the Mission area of MCK). In 1987, six young people were sent to Kenya Methodist University for training. Of those, five, (including the current bishop, David Ntoghonya), returned to Uganda at the end of their training, only to discover that Rev. Mwange had transferred allegiance to UMC. The returning newly trained ministers were told that they had no place if they wanted to stay with MCK. However, having been trained in Kenya, they would not transfer allegiance and after a period of conflict, the Church was re-registered with MCK in 1992. Governance and good leadership became a priority. It wasn't until 2022 that a Ugandan (David Ntoghonya) was appointed Bishop of the Ugandan Synod.

Helen with Bishop David Ntogohnya and Uganda Synod Staff.
(Grace and Aaron on the right of the photo are Both NMAs).
Also with Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman.

The Methodist Church in Uganda is a young Church (70% of the population of Uganda are under the age of 30). The Church Headquarters is in Jinja and the Synod covers a wide rural area of Eastern Uganda. The key priorities identified by Bishop David are:

- Good governance.
- Training in Methodist structures, traditions and Order.
- Good stewardship of local resources.
- Mentoring young people in discipleship.
- Strengthening Connexionalism through Synod and Circuit meetings.
- Working towards being an autonomous Church in 4 years' time.

The Mission of the Church is to be a strong, growing Church, rooted in the Methodist tradition, where members love God with all their hearts and strength and love and serve their neighbours. The Church currently has only 7 ordained Ministers.

Visit to Inula Circuit.

Our few days in Uganda were spent with Connexional staff in Jinja, visiting the town ministries including meeting the Women's Fellowship, and a full day visiting rural circuits a few hours' drive, mostly on unmade roads, from Jinja.

We were accompanied on our visit to the rural circuits by Bishop David and Sr. Nirmala, the Development Coordinator of the Synod. Our first stop was at Inula where a new Church which is under construction to serve a growing congregation. It has a significant number of young people. This is a common story in the rural areas where the Methodist Church is providing educational opportunities and pastoral ministry in places unreached by other churches. Sr. Nirmala requested us to pray that the Church grows spiritually, develops socially through education, and that the Church becomes more financially self-sufficient.

Inula rural circuit. Eastern Uganda.

At Nambula, we visited the Methodist Primary School which parents and staff had themselves built using local materials. The school has 600 pre-school and Primary children on roll and 17 staff. It is situated in the centre of a wide rural geographical area with children attending from distant villages. There is a desperate need for boarding facilities which will also bring an income. Some of the MCB Capacity Building Grant sent in 2024 will be used to construct these. The school has partnered with a charity called 'Compassion' which provides, spiritual, social, health care, and training in cognitive skills to the children.

Nambula School

We were delighted that in honour of Helen's visit, a Women's Fellowship Conference was arranged. As in most churches globally, women make up the majority of congregants and are the 'backbone' of the Church in Africa. The Methodist Church in Uganda is keen to encourage womens' ministry although there are some cultural hurdles to overcome in this gaining full acceptance.

Women's Fellowship. Jinja.

Women of Inula.

Mission Partners. Daniel and Grace Pratt Morris-Chapman.

Daniel and Grace arrived in Uganda in August 2023 and even though they only spent one year in Uganda (finishing their term in August 2024), they had a profound impact through their presence and ministry.

Most Ugandan Methodist members are under the age of 30 and church worship is dynamic. It is also deeply influenced by Ugandan Pentecostalism and has suffered from a lack of training in Methodist

tradition and structures. This is affecting the sense of identity and unity within the Church with many churches and ministers tending to 'do their own thing' but not knowing anything different. In striving to address these challenges, Daniel has managed to translate the Methodist Standing Orders into Luganda, the local language and has undertaken a transformative process of training local churches and ministers in Methodist ways and structures. He has provided the tools for the local Church to discern an authentic Ugandan Methodist presence within the country, stressing each community's place within the structures of the Methodist Synod, Connexion and global family. Until now, this concept has been barely understood.

Daniel has also assisted the Synod Office in establishing robust governance and financial structures that will provide a firm foundation for many years and for the development of the Methodist Church in the country.

Meanwhile, Grace has undertaken a significant ministry in teaching, training, and supporting the Women's Fellowships. Both Daniel and Grace have been deeply appreciated in Uganda and their presence and ministry is a wonderful example of the ways in which the British Church can have a deeply constructive presence and fellowship with its partner Churches.

Daniel and Grace (with Bishop David) beside the River Nile.

"My visit to the Methodist Church in Uganda was a memorable one. It was goodl to spend time with Grace and Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman and their children and with Bishop David and the ministers of the Synod. This young Church has so much to share with us in partnership. The Women's Fellowship event was a time of bible study encouraging the contribution of women in leadership and it was good to see Bishop David make his support for women's leadership so clear and strong. The visit to the church community in Inula allowed us to see the roof being put on the new Church building. The level of commitment in this community was extraordinary and inspiring and the generosity towards us was moving. I learned that the phrase, "please eat a little something with us before you go was likely to become a substantial meal"!

" My visit to Kenya and Uganda was a very great privilege and the enabling and encouragement and support of the Revd Dr Andrew Ashdown throughout made it a joyful experience which I will always be glad about"

AMC Heads of Conferences Summit.
Lagos, Nigeria.
29 May – 3 June 2024

After Helen and Iain returned from Uganda to England, I travelled to Nigeria to attend an Africa Methodist Council Heads of Conferences Summit in Lagos.

The Heads of Conferences Summit and the second Africa Women's Conference met in Lagos from 29 May to 3 June 2024 at the Wesley Chapel, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria. The theme was: "A Revitalized Methodist Movement for the Transformation of Africa's Socio-Political and Economic Landscape." The gathering had representatives from 13 countries including Heads of 24 Conferences from a range of African Methodist expressions, namely United Methodists, Africa Methodist Episcopal Zion, African

Methodist Episcopal, Free Methodists, United Africa Methodist Church (UAMC), Church of the Nazarene and the Salvation Army. This family of Methodist Churches is driven by its vision to be a Unifying Wesleyan Movement for holistic evangelism for the Transformation of Africa and Humanity.

Amongst the resolutions of the meeting, the Heads of Conferences applauded the Capacity Building Grant of £229,000 from the World Mission Fund of MCB for the Building of an AMC Headquarters and Conference Centre as a resource for the Methodist Conferences in Africa. Since then, land has been purchased in Accra and the foundation stone has been laid.

The Heads of Conferences established structures and Committees within the AMC to ensure coordinated action for cooperation and mutual support across the Methodist Conferences on the continent. This is intended to include: intra-continental exchange programmes on, education, Youth Ministry, and Agriculture. Health, mission, cultural exchanges, financial engineering, social interventions, tertiary education, women's exchange programs, and worship. The Council approved the encouragement of such partnerships across the sub-regions. The Conference also sought to undertake more de-centralised activities across the Continent and to promote more online engagement where possible, to reduce the expenditure of in-person Council meetings.

Priorities for the Heads of the Churches were identified as follows:

- A transformed Methodist movement for the transformation of Africa's sociopolitical and economic landscape.
- Supporting issues of Justice in and through the Body of Christ.
- Developing a 21st century Church's response to human-trafficking.
- Ensuring wise stewardship of God's resources and God's people to facing challenges.
- Undertaking wise Leadership in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous world.

The Heads of Conferences appointed a Commission on Justice, Peace, Development, and Reconciliation to assist the Africa Methodist Council in taking forward the issues raised at the Summit. Archbishop Kehinde Stephen from Nigeria; Rt Revd. Dr. Barr Okuekong Alexander Ukut from Nigeria; Revd Gloria Hokonya from Zimbabwe; and Revd Amln Aka Pierre from Cote D'ivoire, and another member to be named from East Africa – were appointed and commissioned as Advisers.

I was the only international partner represented at the Conference and had been specifically invited in recognition of the important role that AMC believes MCB plays in the historic partnership with the Methodist Church in Africa.

AMC Heads of Churches Executive.

With President Obasanjo of Nigeria.

Conference Worship.