



May 2023

Another semester, another group finishing, and another set of practicum students to visit. This time I (Rowland) went to Thika Memorial Church to visit Samuel, one of our BD students. Funny enough, the priest he was working under was also an SPU student, but studying Counseling Psychology with Jane.

I was told to come in the afternoon. When I got there around 1 p.m., I found Samuel teaching catechism in the main sanctuary to a dozen sixth graders from the church-run elementary school next door. I told them I had joined the church in seventh grade so they were one year ahead of me. Samuel also goes to their school during the week to do Christian Religious Education (CRE) classes. Religious education classes are offered in most schools here (Muslim schools offer Islamic Religious Education, and mixed public schools offer both classes).



While Samuel was teaching, I met with Rev Andrew, the one studying counseling psychology. Andrew said he chose to do that degree instead of a bachelor of divinity because, while working as a youth pastor with his diploma in theology, he was constantly asked for advice about personal issues, and so he felt that psychology would help him. His bishop then encouraged him to study counseling at St Paul's University.

Andrew had good things to say about Samuel, who then showed me around the parish. They have an old sanctuary built in the 1920s with some nice stained-glass windows. Their youth service is held in the old sanctuary, while the main English and Kikuyu language services are held in the newer, bigger sanctuary.

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When I posted a picture of these two churches on Facebook, a missionary friend who used to work in Kenya commented that he had started the youth service with about 13 in attendance, 4 of which were his family members. When I told Samuel that during exam week, he said they are now over 100!

Samuel is just one of many students finishing this year. Those who finished this semester had a special commissioning service during which the Dean of Students encouraged them to be useful to God and society. Then, they each lit a candle from one of the three Deans, marched outside to form a circle, and enjoyed tea and cake to celebrate. It was one of the biggest finishing groups ever.



Because you support us and St Paul's University (through the RCA-SPU scholarship fund), many students are getting an affordable quality Christian higher education that will equip them to work in Kenya, East Africa, and beyond. This year we are celebrating 120 years of faithful ministry since the original divinity school was started by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) on the Kenyan coast in 1903.

Please pray that God will continue blessing St Paul's and send more students and staff for another 120 years of faithful service here to God and humanity.

We thank God for answering our prayers earlier this year for rain. We hope the rainy season that has begun will last long enough to ensure a good maize harvest (it is the staple food of Kenya).

Pray also for the economy here, which is suffering from inflation from the war in Ukraine and the devaluation of the local currency against the dollar (which makes everything imported more expensive).

Pray for an easing of the tension between the ruling party and the opposition, which has had several demonstrations over the cost of living as well as still contesting the results of the 2022 election.

Sincerely,

Jane and Rowland Van Es

Your RCA GM partners in mission, serving at St Paul's since 2004.