



Living Letters to Kenya
30th January to February 3rd 2008



International Ecumenical Peace Convocation

Kingston | Jamaica | 2011

Gracious God of life,
You are the friend of the poor, the comforter of the suffering
the consoler of those who mourn, the strength of the weak.

You are the God of all life and of all land...
Hear the cries of Kenya –
 the cries of the women and children,
 the cries of the animals and the valleys
 the pains of your suffering people.

Inspire by your Spirit of Peace the churches of Kenya,
A calling to be instruments of peace in the midst of violence,
A calling to care for the displaced peoples,
A calling to be one in a place of so much division,
A calling to be faithful to your commandment of love.

We offer our prayer in the name of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ,
Amen *(Graham McGeoch)*

Introduction

We went with slight trepidation regarding what we might witness, but secure in the knowledge that we would be with brothers and sisters in Christ who were in need of prayer, peace, reconciliation and the embrace of friends. The words of the Apostle Matthew were never far from our lips, “ *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: *You shall love your neighbour as yourself*’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

As with all biblical mandates, these words come easy to us during times of calm in our lives. During calm, they become easy to say. During situations of crises, our actions are often tested and may come up short. Such was the case in Kenya at several points on varying sides of the predicament. Below, you will find the reflections from various members of the Living Letters Team to Kenya. We did not go to access blame to one side or another, but to stand in solidarity with those in need of comfort so that they would know that they are not alone.

The Living Letters visit was intended to express the solidarity of the world-wide churches with the churches and peoples of Kenya; to listen to them as they shared the story of their recent history; and to learn from them on what the context has to teach them as they prepare themselves for their participation in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) in 2011. It is true that the churches have been complicit in the violence – that they have been divided along ethnic and political lines. Many of the churches carry within them the heritage of a mission history wherein the denominations grew on the basis of their ethnic identities. It was poignant to hear an official from the Red Cross who runs one of the Internally Displaced Peoples camps tell us that, those who went on a rampage of killing and looting still worship in one church or the other.

But, what we saw at the same time, is a church struggling to confess to its part in the violence and to find ways to heal itself and the divisions in which it has sometimes compounded. The National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) has responded swiftly to contribute to the national debate for peace and reconciliation – playing a key role in encouraging the political leaders to put aside their differences and work together. Additionally, the churches have been actively engaging in diaconal and relief ministries – clergy and lay members are present in the camps and with the communities offering comfort and pastoral care to the people. They are also engaged in dialogue among themselves to iron out their differences and to bring reconciliation and hope to their people, the NCCCK has given leadership to an Inter-religious Forum as a broader movement of faith groups working together for peace and reconciliation.

The Executive Committee of the NCCCK came together on the 13 of February, and released a statement entitled Hope for Kenya in which they confess:

“We regret that we as church leaders were unable to effectively confront these issues because we were partisan. Our efforts to forestall the current crisis were not effective because we as the membership of the NCCCK did not speak with one voice We were divided in the way we saw the management of the elections; we identified with our people based on ethnicity; and after the elections, we were divided on how to deal with the crisis.

As a result, we together with other church leaders have displayed partisan values in situations that called for national interests. The church has remained disunited and its voice swallowed in the cacophony of those of other vested interests. We call on church leaders to recapture their strategic position as the moral authority of the nation. We have put in place measures to enable us to overcome divisive forces, and set off on a new beginning. As a church we will do our best in helping achieve the rebirth of a new Kenya.” (full text appended)

Indeed, the churches in Kenya have a testimony of courage and perseverance to offer to the churches world wide and to the declaration on just peace as well as to the IEPC.

Continued prayer is needed for the people and churches in Kenya and for the negotiations for peace. Continued support for the humanitarian crises is most required. It may take years for the full restoration of peace and justice to be realized.

As the delegation went from place to place, Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, who led the team shared what the team thought the important concerns: that the electoral process was deeply flawed and needs to be addressed; that peace, justice and reconciliation are in God’s plan for us; the role of the church as well as engagement with people of other faiths is crucial for successful outcomes and we support the involvement of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) in this; and finally that we encourage all sides of the conflict to allow the former General Secretary Kofi Annan’s process towards negotiation to become a reality.

The members of the Team:

- Rev. Dr **Clifton Kirkpatrick**, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), United States.
- Ms **Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda**, general secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA), Zimbabwe.
- Prelate Dr **Stephan Reimers**, member of the board of the Church Development Service EED member of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the EKD representative to the European Union, Germany.
- Rev. **Stig Utne**m, former general secretary of the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway.
- Rt Rev. **Thomas Olmorijoi Laiser**, Bishop of Arusha, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.
- Mr **Graham Gerald McGeoch**, ministerial candidate of the Church of Scotland and member of the WCC central and executive committees, United Kingdom.
- Dr **Geeske Zanen**, World YWCA board member, Netherlands.

The delegation was accompanied by WCC staff members - Rev. Elenora Giddings-Ivory, Dr Aruna Gnanadason and Mr Juan Michel.

We are most grateful to the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), Dr. Peter Karanja, its General Secretary and his staff and to Dr. Mvume Dandala, General Secretary of the All Africa Council of Churches for the wisdom and assistance they provided to us. To get

more information on the Living Letters programme of the World Council of Churches go to <http://overcomingviolence.org/index.php?id=4104>

Geneva, February 2008

Reflections from Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick

...AND GIVING US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION (II Cor. 5: 19)

I had the great privilege of being part of a World Council of Churches 'Living Letters' delegation to Kenya at the beginning of February. We went at the request of the National Council of Churches in Kenya to support the churches there in seeking reconciliation, to lend the voice of the world church for efforts toward peace, and to share the prayers and concerns of Christians around the world with our brothers and sisters in Christ in Kenya. It was an unforgettable experience. Like my colleagues, I was devastated by the suffering of so many people, yet also left with a sense of hope that Christians and others might yet be a force for justice and reconciliation in that land.

During our time in Kenya, we met with the leaders of the churches and the leadership of the Inter-religious Forum of Kenya. We spent several hours with the Vice President Kolonzo and members of the Kenyan Cabinet and with the Presidential Candidate of the Orange Democratic Movement, Raila Odinga, and the key leadership of that party to share our concerns for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. One of our most helpful gatherings was with the leadership of women's organizations, who were united and passionate that a better way be found to achieve reconciliation. Our most heartbreaking visits were with families whose loved ones had been killed, whose homes had been burned to the ground, and who found themselves stranded in internal refugee camps. We even spent time with some very angry young men who saw no hope for change short of violence.

What we learned was that there are no "quick fixes" to the problems in Kenya. After listening to various explanations of the crisis a member of our delegation from the United Kingdom stated, "This is as complicated as Northern Ireland." And he was right! On the surface the conflict is over a flawed election. Underneath that are years of festering conflicts between the different ethnic groups who make up that nation. Beneath that are deep injustices left over from the Colonial period and a society with one of the widest gaps between the rich and the poor anywhere in the world. What was clear to all was that peace, reconciliation and justice must go hand in hand in any solution. What was also clear to almost everyone with whom we spoke was a profound sense that "this must not be allowed to deteriorate into another Rwanda."

What left me with hope is that the churches, who themselves have at times been compromised, are now committed to being a force for peace and reconciliation, and they have invited all of us to join them in praying and working for peace in Kenya. I do hope and pray that we will head their call and that Kenya will know peace.

(For more information on the visit and the situation in Kenya, you may want to view an interview with me from PBS' Religion and Ethics News Weekly. It can be found on the web at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1123/newsfeature.html>

Reflections from Mr Graham McGeoch

An open letter from a “living letter” visit to Kenya, February 2008

Grace and peace be with you!

Grace for the present and peace for the journey...

Dear friends in Kenya, thank you for your warm and generous hospitality in a time of violence, turbulence and uncertainty. Hospitality of strangers in a strange land (it was my first visit to Kenya) and the warmth of friendship, reaching out to welcome “living letters”, brought an understanding through which we can affirm: “we are not alone”.

Dear churches in Kenya, thank you for openly sharing with us your vulnerabilities. Thank you for the humility to recognise that the people of God have, in some instances, acted in a partisan manner. In some places the unintended consequence of this partisan action has contributed to violence.

Dear National Council of Churches in Kenya, thank you for the prophetic call to peace, justice and reconciliation in your land. Your desire to mediate conflicts, heal the churches and local communities and reconcile diversity encouraged very much the “living letters” and is indeed good news to the people of Kenya. I was reminded of the words of St Paul... “my power is made perfect in your weakness...”

Dear politicians in Kenya, thank you for receiving the “living letters” and so generously giving of substantial time to our dialogues. Thank you for your commitment to the dialogue mediated by Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General. May you take steps towards the immediate cessation of violence and prevent the continued “drift into the abyss” highlighted by Hon. Raila Odinga. May you build on the recognition by Vice President Kolonzo that the churches have a role to play in reconciliation.

Dear activists in Kenya, thank you for your vision of “bread and freedom” for the people of Kenya and the search for a more equitable distribution of resources. Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation must continue to uphold both the dignity of human beings and the voyage of discovery of being human in Kenya.

Dear women of Kenya, thank you for waiting patiently for us in Nairobi while we returned from the rural areas. Your work for peace and your response to the humanitarian crisis in Kenya which seeks to enfold in a warm embrace the suffering of the “internally displaced persons” – human beings; mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, children – brings hope to Kenya of a new tomorrow. A tomorrow in which perhaps the voice of women will be heard in peace negotiations and in the caring and organisation of local communities.

Dear young people of Kenya, you are not alone. The “living letters” heard your suffering and your excluded voice. With *Solo7* in the Kibera slums your cry has become our prayer: “Kenyans want Peace”. “No justice, No peace”. Young artists from slums and rural areas express peace through art, offering alternatives to a new generation. And young people are

reminded of the “responsibility to protect” as elaborated by the WCC, to turn from revenge and build communities of peace.

Dear World Council of Churches, thank you for the invitation to be a “living letter”. Thank you for bringing the churches together to pray together and to be together; to listen and to learn, to share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and peace making in Kenya.

Dear international community, thank you for your commitment to Kenya, for your response to the urgent needs of displaced people and those affected by violence. Church leaders in Kenya appeal to the international community “not to cut aid at this time”, but to continue to work with all Kenyans to respond to urgent needs.

Dear friend, thank you for taking the time to read this letter. In all of Kenya, by people from all walks of life, the “living letters” of the WCC were requested to “pray for Kenya”: to pray for peace, to pray for justice, to pray for reconciliation. May your prayers join with those of the church around the world and with the people of Kenya.

Grace and Peace,

Graham McGeoch

Reflections from Ms Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda **8 February 2006**

1. **Mission Objectives:** The World YWCA and myself deeply appreciated the request to join the WCC Living Letters to Kenya. The mission’s objectives were to express the solidarity of churches worldwide with the Kenyan churches at a particularly challenging time and to learn how best the international fellowship of churches can support Kenyan churches' efforts towards peace and reconciliation. This was the third of such Living Letters commissioned by the WCC with the other two having been to the United States of America and to Sri Lanka.
2. The various meetings, visits and interactions were very strategically planned to provide an insight into the political, socio-economic history of the country, background to the post election violence and its degeneration into community conflict and revenge attacks. What was most striking was the demographic information especially as it relates to the youth as voters, the campaign messages, the expectations of the results among other issues. Equally important for me on the mission was the analysis on the country’s institutions and their internal capacity to address the current crisis confronting the country. I was especially focused on exploring the role of women and young people, the impact of the violence on their lives and the extent to which their specific issue and voices were being integrated into the various responses.

3. **Hearing the Unheard voices.** The NCKK team was excellent in organizing for the mission ensuring that we met with the church leadership in Kenya, the Government officials, the opposition, the Kenya Inter-religious Forum, Nakuru Church leaders and the local leadership in Ndeffo and Mauche. It was great that the YWCA Kenya together with AACC had organized for a meeting with women, to which over 50 participated. Women were very marginal in the various meetings. No women were present in the meetings with government and opposition. At least 4 women were present in the meeting with the Nairobi Church Leaders and we received a briefing on what action they are taking to respond to women's reproductive health and protection issues. The female NCKK Programme Officer for Capacity Building was present. Extra effort had to be made during the field visit for women to have an official opportunity to share their views. The other voices that I did not hear during this mission were those of young people (except in Mauche), of persons with disability and of people living with HIV & AIDS. *It is in recognition of this lack of voices from women in situations of crisis that the UN Security Council passed resolution 1325, and the AU Passed the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality as well as the Women's Protocol.* I would therefore recommend strongly that the church puts extra effort in giving visibility to the voices and issues affecting women, young people, and persons with disabilities.
4. **The Key Issues.** The mission made it quite evident that there are multi-layered issues surrounding the crisis in Kenya. Most people stated that the management of the elections and especially the controversy surrounding the Presidential result was only a trigger of the long standing issues plaguing the country. The list of concerns included historical land issues in the Rift Valley with its roots in the colonial and post colonial actions in Kenya; the constitutional reforms that have not been concluded especially on issues of power sharing and decentralization/devolution/majimboism; high levels of inequalities in Kenya defined by region, class, gender, age, ethnic identities among others. The high level of inequalities in income and employment was at the centre of the mobilization and campaign messages. It is also evident that the violence in Kenya had a number of specific characteristics that included a) post election spontaneous violent protests especially in Nairobi and Kisumu/Western Kenya, b) community conflict in Rift Valley, c) revenge attacks mostly in Rift Valley, Nairobi and Central Province, d) police violence characterised by the "shoot to kill" order, and e) the criminal gangs taking advantage of the general breakdown in law and order.
5. **Impact of the Kenya Crisis.** The high number of displaced mostly women, children and young people was quite deplorable. The wanton destruction of lives and property will remain etched in my memory. Most painful are the cases of sexual violence against women and girls, without at time adequate information on how many have been violated and what services they have received, i.e. counselling or legal, and whether the perpetrators will ever be apprehended. The levels of mistrust, pain, hatred and hardened positions generated by the crisis was quite evident. Tribal sentiments were effectively exploited by the political elite in search of power and position in ways that divided the nation. The relocation of people assisted, voluntary and forced was a manifestation of the fear, lack of security and intolerance within communities.

6. Recommended actions especially by the church.

- a.* Advocate for the church and women to be effectively and formally involved in the mediation process. Civil society and faith based organizations must support the on-going mediation by Kofi Annan facilitated by the African Union, not only in finding a win-win solution to the political crisis, but also laying the ground for the country to address the underlying issues such as land, constitution and devolution, in a way that addresses issues affecting women and young people.
- b.* Continue to support the community peace building efforts sustaining the initiatives by NCKK such as the dialogues of church leaders and elders across communities.
- c.* Provide space and opportunity for effective participation of women and young people to the peace building effort. The inclusion of the YWCA Kenya General Secretary in the Inter-religious Forum is highly commendable.
- d.* The church's response to the humanitarian crisis must take concrete and doable actions towards protection of the rights of women and children and especially on issues of sexual violence and abuse, specific situation of widows, female and child headed households, persons with disabilities as well as access to treatment and care for persons living with HIV and AIDS.
- e.* Noting that the issue of Kenya is within the AU and UN agendas on peace and security, the WCC, YWCA and other organizations must actively contribute to the discussions at these Africa and global level in support of the country level initiatives, in a way that fosters the Decade to Overcome Violence, and the 26th World YWCA Council's Resolutions on UN 1325 and Women's Human Rights.

Reflections from Prelate Dr. Stephan Reimers

In the face of the chaotic situation prevailing in an African country so far considered to be particularly stable, the world Council of Churches sent a delegation to Kenya from 30th of January to 4th of February 2008 of which I was a member representing the EKD. Aim of this visit was to show compassion with the victims and concern for the future development by our presence and spiritual communion in worship, prayer and conversation. The WCC described the mission as a "Living letter" – 2. Cor. 3:3.

"You show that you are a letter from Christ,
the result of our ministry, written not with ink
but with the Spirit of the living God,
not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

The Role of the Churches in the Present Conflict

Our coming was received gratefully and understood as a strengthening ("in such a time only real friends are coming"). An important topic was the attitude of the churches, of which 80 % of the population are members, within the political struggle. Here became apparent, that much church siding with both conflicting parties had taken place, depending on the ties to one of the 42 tribes.

A member of the Kikuyu-tribe, having dropped his position as general secretary of the National Council of Churches last year, had been elected as representative of the governmental party.

His successor Rev. Canon Peter Karanja has set himself the goal to take a position in equidistance to both parties. This attitude was noticeable during the conversations, we had with the leaders of the governmental party PNU – Party of National Unity – and the opposition ODM - Orange Democratic Movement. The politicians regretted the role the churches were playing. They needed healing, too. During the election campaign there had been a PNU and an ODM church.

Peacekeeping Efforts of the Churches

The day before our arrival the National Council of Churches had invited the bishops of the tribes mainly involved in the fights – Kikuyu und Kalenjin – to a day-long meeting. Rev. Karanja reported about a serious and open exchange, which was concluded in a common ceremony of mourning on 15th of February in the district of Eldoret. It was the area where a church had been burnt down to which people had fled.

Our delegation stayed for two days in the border area of both enemy tribes in the rift-Valley province, the “bread-basket of Kenya”. We saw the burnt down houses, shops and schools and talked to the Kikuyus, who had not fled. At night some 600 women, men and children camped in a big schoolroom – guarded by the warriors of their tribe. The second day we drove with the Kikuyu-chief and pastors to the bordering district of Kalenjin. It was the first meeting of the neighbours after the murdering and looting. Accordingly the atmosphere was tense and many attempts of justification were uttered by the Kalenjin speakers. The governmental party was said to have tampered with the election results. Peace was only possible with Odinga as president. The chief of the Kikuyu village objected: “You have killed innocent people who didn’t have anything to do with the elections.” When one of our companions called them to put their trust in Christ alone, there were angry replies from the group of the young Kalenjin: justice, justice! At least at the end there was made an appointment for another meeting on neutral ground.

Causes for the Conflicts

Of the 42 Kenyan tribes there are three bigger and political dominating ones: Kikuyu (22%), Luo (15%) and Kalenjin (12%). President Kibaki is Kikuyu, opposition leader Raila Odinga a Luo who holds an alliance with important Kalenjin politicians.

One member of our delegation, the Lutheran Bishop Laiser from Tanzania, told us about the 123 tribes of his country. There they have an unwritten law that the president is elected from the group of minor tribes.

The struggle in the devastated border area aims at redistributing the land and has historical origins. When after the Kenyan declaration of independence the white farmers left the country, the land was offered for sale. The Kikuyus were quick, founded land-achieving associations and handed plots on to landless families of their tribe. Then the freedom fighters and leaders around Kenyatta managed to secure big farms for themselves. What did not cause a heavy crisis then has become a big problem now after the population has multiplied four times within the past 40 years and the young Kalenjins are looking for land which would

enable them to found families (justice!). Starting out with the present birth rate, the number of inhabitants in Kenya is going to double within the next 20 year to 70 Million people. Though the country is nearly twice as big as Germany, only a fourth of its land can be used agriculturally. Of this land 75% of the inhabitants draw their existence. So real estate becomes the disputed point. Kalenjin politicians like William Ruto had been announcing during the election campaign already, that after election there would be a 'clean-up'. So when Kibaki was prematurely announced to be winner of the election the matter was clear for the Kalenjins: Earlier they stole the land, now they are stealing the victory of the election. The direct action with torches and machetes against the neighbours followed.

The election campaign program of the ODM contains, besides the promise of a complex land reform (i.e. penalty tax for uncultivated land), further political demands, which threaten ownership and dominance of the Kikuyus and the political establishment. Therefore the struggle for power in Nairobi is hard. Neither our conversation with opposition leader Odinga nor the meeting with the vice president Kalonzo Musyoka showed any room for a compromise.

All hope is directed to the negotiation committee chaired by Kofi Annan. If during the next 10 days no break through will take place, the chaotic situation will remain the same in many parts of the country or will increase and an economic and social downhill trend is going to start. Among the victims would be the many social projects, supported by foreign developmental organisations. For the EED Kenya is a country of main emphasis. The cooperation concentrates on fields like rural development, health (including HIV/AIDS) and the strengthening of social backup systems as well as lobbying for democratization, responsible governmental leadership, human rights and access to social services.

Reflections from Rev. Dr. Stig Utne

“Where is your community”? We can pose questions like this to one another because we appreciate diversity. We can also ask them to decide whether we will name the person we ask a friend or an enemy.

I left Kenya with a clear memory of one such confrontational moment. During the visit to one of the violence-stricken areas in the Rift Valley, one Kenyan asked another Kenyan this question in a rather harsh way. His fellow-Kenyan instead of answering asked back why the question was so important. Then the dialogue broke down.

To me this moment captures some of the tragedy which Kenya now faces. If ethnic or tribal or language identity is re-emerging as issue number one when people meet, then the country is in deep trouble.

To travel through the Rift Valley and meet with the violence-struck communities there, was indeed a sad day. Personally I was reminded of what I saw and heard as an Ecumenical Peace Monitor in Kwa Zulu-Natal in South Africa in February-March 1994 where – at that time – ANC and Inkatha were fighting one another in the rural areas. The burning of “the others” house, school and land and the killing, the revenge and the branding “we” versus “them”- all this came up in my mind on that day in the Rift Valley.

In situations where tribe and ethnicity and language matter more and more, the role of the churches and religious communities become paramount. Churches and ecumenical partners like my own must once again critically consider how the Gospel has been preached and heard and contextualized. Prayers for peace – offered in my country or in Kenya – can not only be a plead for “divine intervention”, but must realize that God seeks and needs hearts and minds of people that are willing to be transformed by the Holy spirit to be peacemakers who reach out to “the others”.

I agree with those Kenyans we met who spoke of three key issues that need to be dealt with:

- Responsibility to protect the vulnerable which must remain with the government as their first responsibility
- Space of grace for all Kenyans which means that in whatever community of region you live, you share the grace and the rights which are there for all
- Dialogue with groups of Kenyans that have not been properly heard during the decades since independence; first and foremost young people and women

It was encouraging to hear how the religious leaders in Kenya through the Inter Religious Forum worked together to address the situation almost on a day-to day basis. Personally I would have appreciated more time listening to representatives of non-christian religious leaders. It would have been particularly interesting to hear how the Inter Religious Forum see their role in the Kofi Annan-led mediation that takes place and in the healing and truth and reconciliation process that will be needed in the years to come. The contributions of the religious communities can be many-faceted and the different strategies must be carefully taken into critical consideration. I heard some of them be:

- To sit at the negotiation tables and represent “the people”
- To influence the agenda at the negotiating tables.
- To strengthen the negotiators and their mandate and popular support and prayer
- To do what the negotiators seldom do; prepare the people/all sides on the compromise that will come one day
- To plan for the national agenda of the next 10 years.

Peace is never made. Peace is always in the making in Kenya as in every country experiencing conflict. Peace agreements never created peace. It needs people who are transformed.

Reflections from Bishop Laiser

I am very pleased, grateful and also thankful to the WCC, for this wonderful opportunity availed to me so that I become part of the team to see and hear what had happened to our brothers and sisters in Kenya, as a result of their general election which took place at the end of last year 2007. I must admit that when I received a phone call from Geneva informing that I have been considered to become one of those who will form this team, I hesitated because

of the general situation prevailing there, but then I recalled the call of God to Isaiah (Chap 6:8): **"Whom shall I send and will go for us...."** and Isaiah responded **"HERE I AM SEND ME"**. I then responded to this call.

Following now are my observations, feelings and impressions about what we have seen, felt, heard and experienced when we were there in Kenya.

1. NCKK.

May I express my appreciation to our hosts the NCKK for all what they have done to make sure that our visit was successful. They have planned and coordinated well. They have considered carefully every possible item of our visit, reception where ever we have been, accommodation, security, transport, appointments, preparations to engage us with different people in different meetings and places. They have accorded to us a rousing welcome and they were generous, all these without which our visit would have been rather difficult if not impossible. Bravo National Council of Churches in Kenya.

2. Meetings.

I was not present when our team met briefly with representatives of the Government and PNU led by Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka, and also when the team met with the opposition leader and Orange Democratic Party ODM Raila Odinga; therefore I am not in a position to say much of what was discussed in these two meetings. However I was present when the team met with representatives from a group known in Kenya as PENTAGON at the Pentagon House. This group was led by the Orange Party General Secretary Mr. Anyong Nyong. This meeting centered around discussions on three main issues which are thought to have incited greatly to the whole problem Kenya is currently finding itself in, namely; Land, Tribalism, and election rigging. The Pentagon does not see it as only rigging, but as an outright theft of votes. They even went so far as saying, there will not be peace in Kenya if this matter is not properly addressed, and anything short of president Kibaki stepping down and re-running of fresh election will not be accepted.

3. Visit to Rift Valley.

It was important that arrangements were made for us to visit trouble stricken areas in the Rift Valley; Naivasha, Nakuru, Maucho, Mao forest area and the surroundings. We were able to visit and see multitudes of displaced people around churches, soccer stadiums as well as school compounds. All these manifested the magnitude of the problem currently prevailing in Kenya as a result of rigged elections. We saw on the roads scores of trucks full of property and belongings of the displaced jamming the roads to and from Nairobi heading to their places of origin. The country is in shambles. Those groups we were able to meet were accusing each other for this or that, but all of them accused police, security personnel and even the military for favouritism and for being a major cause for destruction of property and even people's lives.

It was also clear that even some of the church leaders in the area somehow rallied behind their tribal lines. I don't want to skip without mentioning a very important meeting in Nairobi whereby a praying group of women from all walks of life affiliated with YWCA, the AACC and other groups were meeting, discussing and praying to God that God the almighty may bring the lost peace and tranquility to the Nation of Kenya. This group is the only one I saw which was neutral. Their main concern and wish was peace and a peaceful solution to the Nation of Kenya.

My impressions as to what I have seen, heard and experienced personally as one of the members of the group are as follows:-

1. As an outsider and observer, I think there is a lot to be done in addressing those three important issues mentioned at the beginning of this communication; namely Land, Tribalism and the rigging of election which is a crucial issue this time which I dare say this is something which triggered the whole chaotic situation. The way I see it, there is every indication that, opposition won election by far, but then certainly deprived their right simply because the Government have access to police, security officers and the military. These organs are all at their disposal. The fact that even the chairperson of the Electoral Commission of Kenya Mr. Kivuitu at some junction admitted he does not know who lost or won the election cements my argument.
2. I would like also to call on the international community involved in any move to bring peace in Kenya, to address itself on the issue of those displaced people on matters related to relief supplies, shelter and security especially security to women and children. I am skeptical that at the moment the government of Kenya, will not be in a position of distributing fairly relief supplies and perhaps it will not be able to do so because currently the nation itself is undergoing a very difficult situation politically and economically.
3. Lastly, I think now it is time to speak the truth on the matter that; A spade is a spade, The white is white, and The black is black. Had it not been this time for election which was highly rigged, the land problems, and tribalism would have been as they have it have always been in Kenya. A silent problem.

It is my highest hope that the peace making effort led by the former United Nation Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan will be successful in bringing together the two warring parties ODM and PNU in a way that will not deprive the majority of Kenyans of what they have voted for. It is only in that way, this sad situation will be mended before it is past mending.

Reflections from Dr Geeske Zanen

Being already in Kenya before the elections, I was fully aware of the situation of the post election violence, but the opportunity to be able to gain more first hand knowledge has really inspired and challenged me.

I am inspired by the prayers we held with all the different people, from the political leaders to the grass roots we have met. The solidarity within these prayers was well understood. Since the church in Kenya is not a place to cry and to pray together at this moment, I was happy that the Living Letters delegation was able to pray in the different environments, no matter who was in front of us. The challenge for the church leaders to repair their neutral status is huge, but by speaking out this challenge and bringing church leaders together the first steps are made. By the Living Letters visit, the National Council of Churches is encouraged to work even harder on the division within the churches and the necessity of the role of church leaders in the process of healing and reconciliation. It will be a challenge to include all the different churches, but also the different religions in this process. For me this visit is a trigger

to attend different churches in Kenya and talk with the church leaders about their role in peace building.

The people who shared their raw anger and pain with us touched me deeply, but also inspired me. Although they destroyed others property for revenge, they experienced sexual violence, they have lost their relatives or they were ashamed of their own community, they shared their feelings and spoke with us about the future of Kenya. The issues raised have deep roots and a long history and it is clear that the land issue should be solved in the coming time, next to equal access to resources and a new constitution. The challenge to turn the negative energy of the youth into positive energy to build a peaceful society is of high importance, but it is wonderful to see that new youth leaders step forward and good initiatives have been started. The Living Letters visit alone is not enough for me to add my share in the peace building process. The new relations I have started with some of them challenge me to let them feel heard, to give moral support and to encourage them in the good work they are doing.

I was challenged not to feel angry at the government about the lack of justice and security in the country, the lack of care for their people and their hunger for power, but to speak with them openly about the importance of the role of the churches in the mediation and the peace building process. Nyaradzai impressed me in the way she addressed the problems women and children were facing to the politicians in a constructive manner. I was inspired by the historical overview of the conflict by the opposition leaders to see the issues raised in a larger framework. I hope that the Living Letters delegation challenged the political leaders to work at the future of Kenya, despite their personal interests.

I am even more challenged to put the women's agenda on the table. During this conflict, but also during the mediation the women's voices were missing. Young women didn't get the chance to speak in the communities and women church leaders were missing during our visit. During our visit it was clear that women and children are most vulnerable and that the security was insufficient. It is sad to see that for instance lactating women or women living with HIV/AIDS were facing even more problems by lack of access of equipment and medication. I am proud at the initiative of the YWCA to give the Living Letters delegation a better insight in the issues raised by different women leaders. I have learned that women have responded on the humanitarian issues in first instance, but that it is of high importance to start working on the healing and peace building within their families, their communities and their country.

I am happy I was able to share my impressions and thoughts of the situation in Kenya before and after the elections with the Living Letters delegation and I am inspired by the other delegation members in the way they were contributing to the visit in their own way. The international solidarity we have brought is important for the once we have met and the World Council of Churches can build on this contacts in the near future. We have gained more insight in the conflict and in the way different groups and people started with overcoming violence. Unless my active participation in the delegation, I felt sometimes that it was not enough to come for solidarity and prayers. My challenge is to use my energy in a way that the people I have met feel encourage to work on the long-term peace process in Kenya.

Many impressions will stay with me forever and have deepened my relation with the Kenyans and with Kenya. I will never forget my reaction when I found out that on the way back to Kisii half of Sotik had disappeared and I will never forget the youth in Kibera who are full of energy to make a change in their lives. Thank you of being part of the Living Letters

delegation and thank you to the group of the National Council of Churches Kenya, which has organised the visit.

Reflections from Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory

As I prepared for this trip and gave thought to the news unfolding in front of us all on the television and in the newspapers about events in Kenya, I wondered if this is one of those times when we as people neglect to learn from the history of others who may have had similar experiences. I have always been struck by the fact that after a nation has rid itself of the colonial powers that had it in its grips, then elements within that nation then turns on themselves in what is often called 'civil wars'. I ask myself if there is some way to help newly emerging nations toward democracy without internal war? Several scripture come to mind as I wrestle with these questions as I reflect on my experience in Kenya. I will elaborate below.

Once the colonial powers have been expelled, then there is a challenge to see how the new nation will govern itself. One of the most popular US Presidents was Abraham Lincoln. About 75 years after the US Revolutionary War, when the Colonist of the new Americas defeated the British and sent them home, there was a struggle for control of the new nation on the part of several factions. Each wanting to establish a nation in its own image and with its own understanding of democracy.

One of the primary areas of contention was about who could actually be considered a citizen of this new nation. Should this include slaves and indentured servants? Another less known issue was the power of the individual colonies in a federated type government. How much power will actually be left to each of the states to determine their own fate and their own governance? These questions were answered with a civil war 75 to 80 years after the US Revolutionary war with England. Abraham Lincoln's speech, with his famous line of "A house divided against itself, can not stand", was a speech given at a time when he knew that the new nation could no longer be partially slave owning and partially not. This line, as we know it is biblical. It comes from the Gospel of Matthew 12: 22-30. Jesus, when challenged as to whether he is driving out demons because he himself was a demon, shot back by saying that a demon or any one or any thing else does not fight itself and expect to win. Such is the case here. A nation that is divided against itself can not win.

We need one another. The Apostle Paul has said we need one another. Each has its own purpose. Each people have its own strength and weaknesses.

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ...But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' On

the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” (I Corinthians 12: 12-31) We can not say too often that we not only need one another, but we are challenged to love one another as we love ourselves (Matthew 22: 36-40) and to return no one evil for evil (Romans 12: 16-21). These are difficult words by which to live in today’s world.

Reflections from Dr Aruna Gnanadason

We have known Ambassador Bethuel Kiplaghat as a strong and competent Kenyan, who has served his government and the churches there, as well as the World Council of Churches and partners all over the world, with courage, strength of character and clear visions. He has been sought out for his advice, he has led many a peace making delegation, and he has served the Prince of peace well!

It was only on this Living Letters visit to Kenya that I learnt that he belongs to the Kalenjin tribe and originally comes from the West of Kenya. He has now initiated a movement in Kenya called Concerned Citizens for Peace and is slowly building an interfaith network of people from all walks of life and of all ages to work for peace in the country.

He was invited to speak to the Living Letters delegation at the Serena hotel – the site of many of the peace negotiations. He spoke but briefly to us but left a deep impact on the team when he openly acknowledged that it was his people who had gone on a rampage against the Kikuyu people – killing and destroying them. He broke down and wept when he spoke of the 35 men, women and children who had been burnt to death in the church where they were worshipping. He spoke of the need for repentance and forgiveness if there is to be healing and pledged that as a sign of his own confession on behalf of his people, he will not rest till the church was rebuilt by the Kalenjin – as a small token and sign of their desire to be pardoned.

It was such testimonies that made our living letters visit to Kenya so worthwhile. There can be no peace without justice, but there can be no peace if there is no acknowledgement of complicity in the violence and no asking for forgiveness and being forgiven – only then will healing come.

The churches in Kenya have been part of the problem. They are, albeit for historical reasons, divided by tribal loyalties. Missions, when they came to Kenya, converted the people in their tribal groupings and the churches in Europe and USA have continued to maintain relations with their “partner” churches inadvertently maintaining the tribal identity of denominations. Church leaders in Kenya, we were told, had instigated tribal animosities in the pre-election period and did not speak out strongly enough against the violence in the post election period.

As the Red Cross representative of an IDP camp in Limuru told us, “Those who are killing others are still worshipping in different churches.”

But, we came away with hope, because the churches have since gone a long way to work for peace. Under the leadership of the National Council of Churches in Kenya, they have been working with the Inter-Religious Forum to bring peace in the country. This forum includes not just other faith communities but denominations of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, which are not part of the NCCCK – thus forging greater unity in the country. The Living Letters visit was warmly welcomed as sign of global solidarity with the churches in Kenya. From them we have learnt what it means to come together for peace in a time when there is so much of division and hostility.

Feature articles for WCC Media

Kenya: Living Letters allow churches to affirm peace, grasp a complex conflict

By Juan Michel

With peace seemingly returning to the country, churches within and outside Kenya take stock of the experiences made during a month of unrest and violence. Ecumenical visitors recall moving encounters and seek to understand.

Kenyans will remember for a long time 27 December 2007 as the day in which havoc wreaked across a rather peaceful and stable country following the contested results of a presidential election. The political dispute around the poll results triggered an unprecedented bloodshed along ethnic lines. Nearly 1,000 people were killed and over 300,000 fled their homes.

While many churches were divided before the election, pulled by the tribal loyalties of their constituencies, the outbreak of violence found them united in calling for peace and in providing emergency relief to the victims.

"Churches responded a lot and quickly", says Dr Geeske Zanen, a biologist from the Netherlands. A member of the board of the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Zanen was working as a volunteer in Kisii, in the Nyanza province, when the violence started. There she witnessed how "churches opened their premises, provided food and aid, worked with the Red Cross and offered a certain security to people fleeing the violence".

At the end of January, Zanen joined an international ecumenical team who paid a solidarity visit to the country on behalf of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Part of the council's Living Letters initiative to accompany churches facing situations of violence, the visit took place from 30 January to 3 February 2008, while violence was still rampant and the political mediation led by former UN secretary general Kofi Annan was in its initial stages.

Hosted by the National Council of Churches of Kenya, the Living Letters team met top level representatives of the two parties engaged in the political stalemate. "Kenyans would like to see their political leaders affirming peace and sorting out their differences, for which a political compromise is needed", was the clear message conveyed to them.

The team met as well with religious leaders, both Christian and of other faiths, civil society organizations, women's networks and local communities.



The brunt of the crisis has been borne by women and children, like these Luhya women from Nyanza and the Western province, who had to flee the tea farms she were working at in the Central province. They were staying at the Tigoni camp near Limuru, in the outskirts of Nairobi, where some 6,000 people have found shelter. Photo: Juan Michel/WCC

Neighbours against neighbours

The visits to communities on the ground provided most moving and insightful glimpses into the complexity of the Kenyan conflict.

In Nakuru, the fourth largest Kenyan city, located in the Rift Valley at some 160 kilometres from Nairobi, the team met with local pastors. More than 60 people had been killed there a few days before and the city was still under curfew. Some 6,000 people were sheltered in a makeshift camp at a sports stadium.

"This is a fight between the poor, incited by politicians on the basis of real issues like the land distribution", the team was told by Rev. Michael Mandia, from the Presbyterian Church in East Africa. "Kenya is one of the most unequal countries in the world and this unleashes tribal clashes every five years", said Rev. Naftaly Mwenda Mburugu, from the Methodist Church in Kenya.

From Nakuru, a bumpy, dusty rural road burning under the sun brought the team to the rural heart of the Molo district, in the Rift Valley. The road was bordered by empty houses. Glasses had been shattered, roofs partially taken off, furniture looted - that is, when the houses had not been burnt to the ground. No one was in sight. The vehicles ran slowly, their silent passengers staring at the desolation.

In Kihingo, the team met a community of Kikuyus that had been attacked by their Kalenjin neighbours and were sheltering in a school. When the delegates met them, they were returning to their homes for a few hours to salvage some maize, potatoes - just something to eat. "About 30 of our people were killed by arrows and 'pangas' [machetes]", Samuel Macharia Wamai, the chief, told the visitors while members of the community gathered around them.

Wamai also reported cases of rape against girls and women and the dire situation of some members of the community living with HIV and AIDS who could not reach the Nakuru hospital to get their medicines.

To the question "Who killed your people?" the chief answered: "I don't want to name tribes, but they were killed by their neighbours, people they knew by their names. They begged the attackers not to kill them, but in vain." Wamai blames conflicts which predated the electoral dispute for the violence: "This was triggered by the elections, but the root cause is not political, it is the land. There is a community who claims this is their ancestors' land and wants to chase out other communities whom they see as invaders."

After praying with the Kikuyu community, the team of visitors met with the Kalenjin community just across the road, on the opposite side of the small valley. The name of the place is Mauche. The houses were intact but life was nonetheless difficult. No tourists were stopping by the small shops, schools were closed, people were afraid to go out of the village.

Presided by the community chief, a spontaneous assembly gathered around the visitors, who had the opportunity to listen to elders, pastors, women leaders and youth. They reported five people from their community had been killed.

"Our youth are unemployed, our widows without assistance, we cannot go to town, we do not receive relief aid", said Mary Rotich Chepchumba, a women's leader. "The issues here are historical; since the independence there has been a wound that never healed and that now hurts again", said an elder. "We need peace, but we also need to share resources and opportunities equally", said Henry Langat, a retired teacher.

Robert Bett, a young member of the community, added: "We need an all inclusive constitution that lifts the aspiration of all Kenyans; we are educated, young and energetic, we want to go forward; we know about democracy and governance, we want change and we are pressing for change until change comes; we know the Kenya we want: a democratic, fast growing Kenya, a Kenya with a future."

Like in Kihingo, in Mauche, too, the gathering ended with a prayer.

Tacking stock of the Living Letters experience

After five days of intense and moving encounters, the Living Letters team members prepared to return to their countries, where they would report to their churches and in some cases to their governments about the needs on the ground in terms of financial support, humanitarian aid, and long term capacity building.

"I am very impressed by the work the Kenyan churches are doing", said Rev. Stig Utnem, a pastor from Oslo and former general secretary of the Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of the Church of Norway. "In particular, the inter-religious forum in which they participate is an achievement they can be proud of."

"Coming face to face with people allowed us to see the reality in all its complexity", said Graham Gerald McGeoch, a ministerial candidate of the Church of Scotland and member of the WCC central and executive committees. McGeoch was impressed by the churches "humility to recognize that the people of God have, in some instances, acted in a partisan manner".

Rev. Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and head of the Living Letters team, underlined that "to the extent that religious communities are organized along ethnic lines, they have contributed to the problem, but they are also being part of the solution."

Prelate Dr Stephan Reimers found "the Living Letters idea very productive as it helped the NCKK to affirm its peace message to the political establishment, which was still in an antagonistic tension". The representative of the Evangelical Church in Germany to the European Union, Reimers highlighted the importance of continuing funding the good work done by the NCKK.

According to Zanen, "women's voices were missing during the conflict as well as during the mediation. Young women didn't get the chance to speak in the communities and women church leaders were missing during the visit". So, one of the challenges is "to put the women's agenda on the table".

"Unfortunately, it will take years for the situation in Kenya to come back to normalcy", affirmed Bishop Thomas Olmorijoi Laiser, from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

Tanzania. "The issue of what went wrong at the elections needs to be addressed in order to ensure that the citizens' political will is respected. This is valid not only for Kenya, but for other African countries as well."

Another pressing issue is tribalism. "Can Africa survive with this kind of tribal-related identities that confine us to a narrow perspective?", wondered Ms Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, a Zimbabwean recently appointed general secretary of the World YWCA. "We need to introduce a new language into the public discussion about who we are."

For Rev. Canon Peter Karanja, general secretary of the NCK, Kenyans "need to understand that the interests of any ethnic community are linked to all the others and that the country is large enough for all of us to have a place. This is something that cannot be sorted out by Kofi Annan or anyone else, but only by Kenyans ourselves."

Kenyan churches seek peace for country "on the verge of genocide"



At a meeting with members of the NCK Nairobi regional committee. From left to right: Bishop Moffat Cleoppa, from the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa; Archbishop Njeru Wambugu, from the National Independent Church of Africa; Hellen Muchogu, organizer of the women's guild of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa.
Photo: Juan Michel/WCC

As Kenyan churches are struggling to help prevent the country from descending into genocide, they envision a long term healing effort that will require the sustained engagement of international ecumenical partners.

With a death toll increasing by the day and a growing number of internally displaced people, Kenya is facing its worst crisis since independence 45 years ago. After the disputed presidential election of last December over 800 people have been killed, including two members of parliament.

As a result of the violence, several thousand people have fled their homes and are sheltered in some 130 camps around the country. The number of displaced people

varies from government estimates of 230,000 to estimates by relief agencies of 500,000.

"As the country is on the verge of genocide", said Canon Peter Karanja, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCK), "the churches are taking action at different levels". Karanja briefed an international ecumenical delegation visiting Kenya from 30 January to 3 February, as part of the World Council of Churches "Living Letters" initiative in solidarity with churches facing situations of violence.

Kenyan churches are urging the leaders of the two main parties blocked in the political stand-off, to keep talking to each other. "No one is innocent", said Karanja, "and we pray for the mediation process led by Kofi Annan to bear fruits."

The churches' peacemaking efforts are being conducted through both an interreligious forum and face-to-face encounters between Christian leaders belonging to different ethnic communities. The first of these encounters took place on 30 January in Nairobi and involved some 25 bishops from different denominations, from both the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities.

Participants left the meeting committed to urge their people to end violence and not to take revenge. "It is a courageous thing for them to have come to this meeting", said Karanja. A similar encounter between Kikuyu and Luo bishops is to take place next week and others are expected to follow.

The interreligious forum brings together representatives of the Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, African Instituted and Adventist churches, as well as of the Muslim and Hindu communities. Faced with the crisis, it focused its work on promoting political mediation efforts, providing relief aid, coordinating a country-wide prayer movement and reaching out to media outlets in order to promote peace messages.

Even though religious leaders "are being pulled so much by their tribal feelings", said the Anglican Archbishop of Kenya Benjamin Nzimbi, chairman of the forum, "they have been working hard together before, during and after the election asking people to choose peace and prevent chaos".

Kenyan churches are also involved in direct relief efforts to alleviate the consequences of the humanitarian crisis created by the massive displacement of people. The NCKK is currently working in five camps, providing emergency aid and pastoral support with a special focus on addressing the trauma of children.

In the Nairobi area the population "is not very much affected except for the displaced people who are arriving", said Archbishop Njeru Wambugu, from the National Independent Church of Africa. But, adds Bishop Moffat Cleoppa, from the Pentecostal Evangelistic Fellowship of Africa, "we are seeing people giving sacrificially, sharing their resources with their neighbours as never before".

"Apart from all the butchering and displacing, there is still love in Kenya", said Hellen Muchogu, organizer of the women's guild of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Wambugu, Cleoppa and Muchogu are members of the NCKK Nairobi regional committee.

Healing the wounds caused by the crisis in the long term will require resources that are beyond the Kenyan churches' capacity. "Everyone, including politicians, expects the churches to play a big role in terms of reconciliation, healing, resettlement and trust building", said Karanja, adding "we will need sustained and committed engagement of our international ecumenical partners if we are to fulfil that role".

In the shorter term, prayer seems to be more urgent. "We need your prayers for people to come back to their senses", said Nzimbi. "We must bring Kenya back where it ought to be."

Make peace now, an international ecumenical delegation has urged Kenyan top political leaders

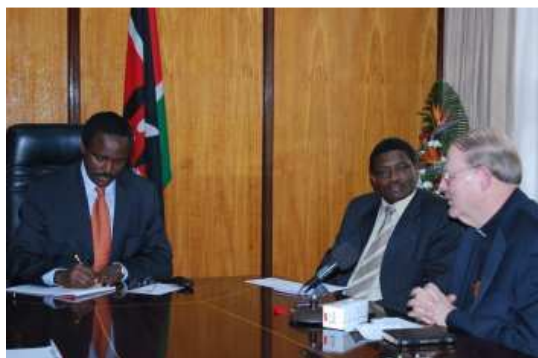
As mediation to solve the disputed Kenyan presidential election enters a critical phase, top-level figures from the two parties met an international ecumenical delegation, which asked them to move on from the electoral dispute and seek a compromise solution.

The seven-member group of church representatives sent by the World Council of Churches as part of its "Living Letters" initiative in solidarity with churches facing situations of violence, visited Kenya from 30 January to 3 February.

The group met with the country's vice-president Kalonzo Musyoka - as the president Mwai Kibaki was attending the African Union summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia - and with the leader and presidential candidate of the Orange Democratic Movement, Raila Odinga.



The head of the ecumenical delegation Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick (right) with the Orange Democratic Movement's Raila Odinga (left).
Photo: Juan Michel/WCC



From left: Kenya's vice-president Kalonzo Musyoka; Canon Peter Karanja, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK); Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick.
Photo: Juan Michel/WCC

"Kenyans would like to see their political leaders affirming peace and sorting out their differences, for which a political compromise is needed" - was the message from Canon Peter Karanja, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK), which hosted the visit.

"It is true that there is no peace without justice, it is also true that there is no justice without peace" - affirmed the head of the ecumenical delegation Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Although affirming their full commitment to the African Union mediation process led by former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, both parties predictably made the case for their own victory in the 27 December presidential election and handed over documents to the delegation supporting their claims.

"We are not here to judge poll results", Kirkpatrick said. "These documents are unlikely to be helpful to anyone", Karanja added. "Now it is essential to separate issues of human life and dignity from the search for political justice".

In turn, the ecumenical delegation made a strong case for those suffering the brunt of the crisis. "Many women and children are amongst the most affected by the violence and as a

consequence of the forced displacement", said Ms Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, general secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association.

"Their needs are not only shelter and food, but health care, including access to HIV and AIDS medication, security, including protection against sexual abuse, as well as counselling for the trauma they are undergoing", Gumbonzvanda said.

Violence broke out along ethnic lines in Kenya following the announcement of Kibaki's electoral victory, and its rejection by the Orange Democratic Party. Over 800 people have been killed and several hundred thousand have fled their homes and are sheltered in dozens of makeshift camps around the country.

The meetings of the ecumenical delegation with both parties, which lasted over two hours each, allowed for frank and in-depth discussion of the current crisis as well as for moments of prayer.

The delegation made the case for the Kenyan churches to be full partners in the mediation process, but this was met with expressions of disappointment regarding the churches' role during the electoral process. "Right now in Kenya the churches need to heal themselves first"; "the churches have failed us as they have taken partisan positions." - These were some of the complaints voiced by both political parties.

The NCKK general secretary acknowledged embarrassment about this amongst church leaders, but affirmed that they have tried to take responsibility. "A deep process of reflection has taken place after the election, and the crisis has encountered the churches united in their call for peace and reconciliation", he said.

As an example, Karanja mentioned a memorial service for the victims at the burned church in Eldoret, in which bishops from the two tribes involved will take part. It will be held in Kitale on 15 February.

The ecumenical delegation also heard about the deep-rooted historical grievances that underlie the current unrest. Amongst the main issues are inequalities in terms of land distribution and access to state resources and opportunities, as well as perceived or real tribal privileges.

"Kenya would never have a lasting peace without these fundamental issues being addressed", Karanja said, "but that cannot be done at the time of an election".

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK)

Press Statement by the Executive Committee of NCCCK

Friday, February 15, 2008

HOPE FOR KENYA

A. Introduction

The Executive Committee of the National Council of Churches of Kenya has today held an extra-ordinary meeting to reflect on the national crisis and wishes to bring the following message to the nation of Kenya.

We note with deep concern and great sadness that the crisis our nation is going through is the worst we have had in our history. More than a thousand people are dead; nearly half a million have been displaced; and property of unknown value has been destroyed, all in a short period of six weeks.

As a result, our national and social fabric has been torn apart. Kenyans are living in fear. The trust we have had for each other and especially for our neighbours has been destroyed, our identity and national pride as Kenyans has been undermined. Our nation has regressed to pre-modern times where ethnicity is glorified and commitment to national ideals by both political leaders and their supporters are put to question.

Hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters are living in squalid conditions in churches, schools, police stations, chief's offices, shopping centres and other locations where they have run to seek safety. Most have inadequate supplies of even the basic necessities, and the current rains are adding to their misery. This is a mark of unwarranted and unnecessary national shame.

In our reflections, we have noted the following issues of concern:

B. Wrong Value Systems

We reiterate the words of the Inter - Religious Forum that the kind of activity we have seen since the presidential results were announced is sinful, barbaric, retrogressive and self defeating. It is utterly wrong, and should be stopped forthwith. There cannot be a legitimate excuse of stealing, killing and destroying property.

It is clear to us that at the core of this unfortunate development is a wrong value system. As a people, we have not upheld the values that would promote human dignity and nationhood. This is worrying as it reflects a moral breakdown, which is beyond the realm of political engagement and current efforts at resolving issues may be unable to address it.

We regret that we as church leaders were unable to effectively confront these issues because we were partisan. Our efforts to forestall the current crisis were not effective because we as the membership of NCCCK did not speak with one voice. We were divided in the way we saw

the management of the elections; We identified with our people based on ethnicity; and After the elections, we are divided on how to deal with the crisis.

As a result, we together with other church leaders have displayed partisan values in situations that called for national interests. The church has remained disunited and its voice swallowed in the cacophony of those of other vested interests. We call on church leaders to recapture their strategic position as the moral authority of the nation. We have put in place measures to enable us overcome the divisive forces, and set off on a new beginning. As the church we will do our best in helping achieve the rebirth of a new Kenya.

As the National Council of Churches of Kenya, we affirm the dignity and rights of every Kenyan which must be protected by the government and all national institutions. We urge that measures be put in place through genuine dialogue and discussion which will eliminate and criminalize negative ethnicity and institutionalize peaceful co-existence, inclusiveness, tolerance, patience as the hallmarks of our society.

In this regard political leaders and supporters from all ethnic groups and political parties who fanned, planned, financed or perpetrated the killing and displacement of fellow Kenyans, the destruction of property and peoples livelihood must be investigated, apprehended, prosecuted and punished for their crimes and abuse of the rights of others.

On their part, we wish to remind the members of our security forces that Kenyans will hold them accountable for their actions. Excessive use of force will not benefit the nation.

C. Strengthening Leadership

This crisis has revealed weaknesses in our national leadership. It is extremely saddening that people had to die, hundreds of thousands displaced, properties worth billions of shillings destroyed, and the economy brought to a halt, yet it took international pressure for our leaders to come to the negotiating table. We call on religious leaders and other stakeholders to marshal efforts and craft profiles of the kind of leaders we need and nomination processes to include standards that ensure integrity and credulity of leaders at all levels.

In addition, Kenyans must demand that our political parties are subjected to rigorous audit to eliminate parties who lean on blind ethnic support as bargaining chips in the national political arena.

D. National Structures

The General Elections of December 2007 brought to fore the weaknesses of our national institutions. NCKK urges that as a nation we address these weaknesses, which include:

One, Creation of a Credible and Competent Electoral Commission of Kenya. There must be a genuine contribution by all political stakeholders in how members are chosen and vetted in order to uphold its neutral referee role in our elections.

Two, The Structure and Functioning of the Judiciary. The inordinately slow pace of dealing with election petitions has been given as the reason for subjecting Kenyans into extra-judicial attempts to broker political justice which has cost our nation the shame and destruction we have been through. The judiciary must be

subjected to thorough reforms which will lead to the restoration of the confidence of Kenyans in it.

Three, The Conduct of Parliament. The performance of the Ninth parliament was extremely unsatisfactory and its collective selfishness and greed a big surprise to Kenyans. Parliament could soon find itself irrelevant and alienated from Kenyans unless it can demonstrate statesmanship and patriotism that enables members to rise above personal and party vested interests with regard to national issues.

Four, The Civil Service. We commend the civil service for its recent reforms which have led to better service delivery. But nevertheless, we call for sensitivity in appointments and recruitment which must genuinely reflect the face of Kenya in its ethnic diversity without compromising merit.

Five, The Presidency is a symbol of national unity and requires respect from all Kenyans. In the same vein, we urge that the incumbent and all successors demonstrate commitment to the welfare of all Kenyans without any form of favoritism, cronyism or discrimination. The reforms we all await must both preserve its dignity but elaborate accountability to pre-empt abuse of office.

E. Constitution Review

To facilitate the re-engineering of our nation, a proper constitution review is essential.

We recognize that Kenyans now have a golden opportunity to return to the constitution review process, not for grandstanding, but rather with a vision to lay foundations for a better country.

We as NCKK wish to state that the last review process was hijacked by activists and some individuals who hardly represented anybody, while the process was unduly politicized. This derailed the process, denying Kenyans a worthy constitution. We urge for a new roadmap to be developed with a new configuration of sober Kenyans who represent recognized constituencies and who are vetted to ascertain their integrity and competence to ensure the good of all Kenyans. Now that all have seen how reckless some of our politicians can be, they must never be allowed to hijack the Kenyans right to craft their own constitution.

F. Future Use of Land in Kenya

We call on Kenyans to reason at this critical moment. There were approximately 8 million Kenyans at independence. Today, we are nearly 34 million, and can expect to reach 50 million in another twenty years. We, as a people, must realize that we cannot continue to depend on land in the way we do now successfully.

We therefore must agree on how we shall share and manage power, space and resources if we are to have lasting peace and stability in our nation.

We call on the government to move with speed to develop a comprehensive plan of land allocation and management so as to eliminate the contradiction of excessive land ownership by a few people and abject poverty of a greater majority Kenyans.

G. Resettlement of IDPs and Reconstruction

We urge that all political leaders and leaders from other sectors as a measure of minimum good faith jointly visit all the clash areas and destroyed commercial centres.

The resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons and the reconstruction of destroyed premises and infrastructure to facilitate return to normalcy must then be given priority over the convenience of political players who have consistently pursued personal interest at the expense of public good.

There is also a strong case for de-politicization of ordinary Kenyans lives and economic activity as a key to alleviation of poverty and as part of the far reaching reforms that our current situation demands.

H. Mediation Efforts

Kenya is one nation under God and subject to God's judgement at all levels of society, both governments and citizens.

As the National Council of Churches of Kenya put our faith in God that He will enable us resolve the current crisis and the underlying issues. Nevertheless, we appreciate the ongoing mediation efforts, especially the African Eminent Persons team led by His Excellency Kofi Annan. In this regard:

- i. We demand that the members of both negotiating teams stop treating the lives of Kenyans as cheap collateral that can be traded for political gain;
- ii. We urge all the parties in the mediation process to ensure that they negotiate effectively so as to get the best for the nation and for our people;
- iii. Further, we urge members of both teams should cease making public statements that can undermine the mediation process;
- iv. Appreciating that the outcome of the mediation process may require legal enforcement, we call upon Parliament to prepare to expeditiously enact all necessary legislation to facilitate this;
- v. We also call upon all Kenyans to accept and abide by the outcome of the mediation process, and hold their MPs responsible in ensuring that this crisis as well as the underlying factors are resolved.

I. Conclusion

In conclusion, we again remind all Kenyans that this is our country. God gave us a beautiful country and many diverse peoples with incredible gifts. Let us embrace each other as brothers and dwell in peace with each other. We urge that we all sow the right seeds: The seeds of love, justice, peace and unity. The Bible warns that whatsoever a man plants, that shall he also reap. If we sow the seeds of hate, we shall reap death and more hatred.

We call upon all Kenyans to maintain peace and to refrain from revenge attacks.

Let us all work for the betterment of our nation.

Signed on this **13th day of February 2008** at *Jumuia Conference and Country Home, Limuru.*

Rt. Rev. Dr. Eliud Wabukala
Chairman

Rev. Canon Peter Karanja
General Secretary

Statement on the crisis in Kenya and the churches' response

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:36-40)

1. Kenya and its many communities are going through an extremely painful experience following heavily contested elections. Hundreds of people have been killed and thousands more have been wounded or maimed. Hundreds of thousands of citizens have been forced to flee from their homes. In the shadows of chaos, unknown numbers of women and girls have been subjected to sexual violence. People living with HIV and AIDS have been cut off from medical care. Uncounted homes and businesses have been looted and burned and many livelihoods destroyed.
2. Kenya’s presidential elections of 27 December 2007 were followed by accusations and counter-accusations between the main opposition party and the ruling party about whether the ballot had been manipulated or sabotaged. The violence that followed shook a country that only weeks earlier was admired for a robust electoral contest and, five years ago, became a model for peaceful democratic change in Africa when its people insisted on the implementation of a multi-party political system.
3. Churches around the world have followed these events with concern and sorrow, with soul searching and prayer, with gifts of assistance and actions of solidarity, including the mediation efforts of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCC Kenya), Kenya’s Inter-Religious Forum, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the “Living Letters” delegation of the World Council of Churches in January 2008.
4. Signs of a turning-back from confrontation and violence now give cause for cautious hope. Standing as Kenya’s neighbours in a global village, we thank God for the many peace-making efforts by churches and join with the sentiments expressed by the AACC: Speaking in the darkest hour of crisis, the Nairobi-based council called Kenya “the steward of Africa’s collective hope” and said their host nation’s “joys have become our joys and therefore its pains, our pains...The theology of the body of Christ urges us to be available for one another, not only for those who share at the common sacramental table, but for the world for which Christ died”.
5. The disastrous aftermath of the elections should be understood within the broader social and historical context of Kenya. The root causes of the kind of violence that has raged for weeks can be traced to pre-independence and post-colonial political dispensations. The constitution crafted at the dawn of independence in 1963 should have been understood as

a transitional instrument. It did not deal sufficiently with critical issues such as land ownership and a bill of rights. Subsequent constitutional changes gave mixed signals or were inadequate: making Kenya a de jure single party state in 1982, reverting to multi-party democracy in 1991 and making a spirited but inconclusive attempt to write a new constitution prior to the recent elections. Another much-needed measure - electoral reform, including a truly independent electoral commission - is still pending, now at great cost.

6. The current constitution and certain government institutions appear to have been misused to meet partisan political interests rather than the interests and aspirations of ordinary Kenyans. A presidency that is predicated upon the politics of patronage, without institutionalized power-sharing, hardly inspires people's confidence that the public interest will be met. The perceived pattern is that gaining public office benefits the winner's community more than others in the constituency. The difficulty of gaining a seat or a tendency to hold onto power year after year only strengthens the popular conviction that this form of democracy is defective and must be repaired. Unless it is repaired, future presidential elections may be just as intractable as this one and potentially as dangerous to the nation. This need to build public trust in government is not unique to Kenya.
7. While the current conflict is a consequence of disputed presidential elections, the communities in conflict have long-standing and often unvoiced concerns dating back to independence, when many Kenyans felt that their communal expectations were not met. The independent government inherited colonial structures and then failed to address certain injustices and inequalities that divided the nation. Issues that affected many communities and various ethnic groups went unresolved. A negative colonial legacy grew into a post-colonial political problem. External factors also continued in new ways and old, influencing the political culture, shaping expectations of a growing population and driving key sectors of the national economy.
8. Churches of the WCC gave early notice of such trends in Africa in a statement on Unity and Human Rights in Africa Today by the WCC central committee in 1971, "The interference of rich and powerful foreign nations offers the most serious threat to the stability and development of African nations, and makes the solution of the existing problems of tribalism and internal dissidence more difficult". These political, social and economic forces, the committee said, "menace the aspirations of the African peoples for unity and for a human existence in full dignity and independence".

Sobered by the reality of inter-communal violence, seized of the need for churches to discern their role in times of deep crisis, and convinced of the capacity for societies to allocate power with accountability, the central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 13–20 February 2008:

- A. **Recognizes** that churches were among those implicated in the crisis and, as the NCC Kenya has stated, were "unable to effectively confront these issues" because of partisanship;

- B. *Affirms* church leaders and members who became advocates for peace and unity during Kenya's electoral crisis, and commends the same role to churches in comparable crises elsewhere;
- C. *Urges* that churches in countries facing related crises learn with the churches of Kenya about the need, for example, to issue joint calls to end violence, to do so as promptly as possible, to speak out consistently for the protection of human life, and to demonstrate the Christian commitment to peace by taking an active part in on-going processes of mediation, reconciliation and healing between the parties in conflict;
- D. *Recommends* that, when societies become deeply divided and where it is possible, member churches and councils of churches support platforms for dialogue among government, opposition and civil society leaders where they may hear alternative views, debate differences, agree to negotiate, and take steps to prevent, reduce and stop violence;
- E. *Encourages* churches to initiate and participate in efforts to build up interfaith collaboration and advocacy for peace and reconciliation, noting the work of the Inter-Religious Forum in Kenya;
- F. *Affirms* the need for church members and leaders to promote a culture of dialogue - in church, between churches and in society - where diverse groups are made welcome, where differences are addressed and where, as far as conscience permits, partisan political alignments are avoided and the common good prevails; *further affirming* the hope that relationships between churches may be bridges across divided communities and a safety net in times of crisis;
- G. *Encourages* churches to be actively involved in programmes of civic education and education for democracy, human rights and the dignity and equality of women and men, and to take part in programmes to monitor and follow-up electoral processes;
- H. *Applauds* the wider African and international community engagement in mediation and conflict resolution efforts, such as the work of the African Union and the counsel offered by distinguished African leaders; and *encourages* the provision of humanitarian assistance to people who are displaced or returning home, especially through Action by Churches Together.