

Jensen Missions

Iringa, Tanzania
East Africa

George and Joy
Jacob, Luke and Lindsey

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GROWING PAINS

I recall when my siblings and I were growing up there would be some leg aches. We played hard and slept hard. We experienced what might be called growing pains.

We have been laboring in Iringa for one year. On our very first visit I remember counting 10 adults and 10 children – an attendance of 20. Last Sunday we had 48 in worship and that has been about the usual for a while now. We have been planting the seed and watering and “God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6). We have been so thankful for God’s blessings.

One thing that has thrilled us is the opportunity we have had to teach and labor following the New Testament example. During his journeys, when Paul arrived at a town, he did not come with trumpets and pomp. Rather, this apostle to the Gentiles had a teaching focus. “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Upon arrival at Philippi, Paul, the beloved physician Luke and their companions made their way to the riverside where they “supposed there was a place of prayer” (Acts 16:13). Among the ladies gathered was one Lydia, whose heart God opened, by means of the preached word (Acts 16:14, 13) and “she was baptized, and her household” (Acts 16:15).

We also have been blessed to meet, teach, and baptize precious ladies – Prisca, Olivia, mama Salome. Men also have given heed to the teaching of Christ –

FOSTER PARENTS

Charles' brother died some time ago leaving a wife and children. In this culture it is very common for such children to be divided between family members for care. Charles and Editha are now in custody of Aga, his 10 year old nephew. They also care for Anna, another relative's child who is here in Iringa for schooling. Please pray for the new foster parents.

Growing Pains...continued

Shadrack, Deo and Christopher. Many others have been taught thoroughly but have as yet not obeyed the gospel – their number would be too many to list. We believe the key to true conversion is adequate teaching which brings people “to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4) - the very thing God desires. Jesus made it clear that a prospective disciple must “first sit down and count the cost” (Luke 14:28).

Back during the very first meeting of the men, we missionaries were asked what we came to bring. They assumed we would follow the pattern others had set. What was obvious was their interest in material amenities. Would we be building this or that, maybe a primary school, or maybe putting some members on support? Initially they were disappointed to learn that we came to work “with them” rather than to bring many things “for them.” We made it clear that we came with a ministry of the word.

What a thrill it has been to see members doing for themselves. Before we ever arrived in Iringa, brother Isaac was supporting his family by building furniture. When the congregation began to outgrow the little wooden benches, the men allotted an amount of money from the local treasury for him to build more benches (with backs even – very nice). When the songbooks became tattered and few, new ones were purchased by the congregation. Oh, sure, we could have sent one e-mail to the States and had brethren send enough money to buy 100 song booklets in one fell swoop. But do I even need to mention the difference in the attitude of people when something is a handout, versus something they have invested in? When our African brethren are given the dignity to build as they grow we are building for the future.

Before our arrival David was preaching for the congregation to the best of his ability. We did not come in as missionaries and take over the pulpit. Yes Carey, Charles, Jacob, and I preach occasionally when we are asked. But David remains the preacher. When he had need of better transportation guess what happened? It was not the idea or even a hint from the missionaries, but the men chose to allot an amount from the treasury for David to buy a bicycle.

These may seem like insignificant steps but they are vital for a local congregation to grow toward maturity. Recently the men had some difficulties understanding God’s plan for church leadership. It was particularly hard for some to think beyond the denominational concept that the preacher is like a pastor. Bible lessons helped establish the truth that every Christian man should mature to the point of meeting the qualifications for an elder, but for a few exceptions (i.e. all men are not required to be married or have children). It will surely be a long time before the congregation has men qualified, but they must have the goal.

I thank God for allowing me to live to see this type of congregational development. My prayer is that little by little both supporters and missionaries will see the long-term merit of following this type of non-hype, congregational-empowering evangelism. *George Jensen*

Looking Ahead - 2012

Have you ever wished you could look into the future and know what God has planned for your life? That could be either an advantage or disadvantage, depending on the circumstances. However, none of us has that ability.

We know that many of our friends, family and supporters are anxious to know where we will end up this year, and we can assure you that no one is more anxious to know that than we are! However, such a transition – moving back to the U.S. from a third-world country, while trying to figure out where you are going before you get there – is not an easy task.

Sometimes it feels like we are in between a rock and a hard-place. On one hand, we have some things we need to ship back, but we have no idea where to ship them. On the other hand, it is going to be difficult to line up work while still on the other side of the globe.

It is likely that George will need to make a preliminary trip to the States to visit with a prospective congregation before a final decision would be made, which is wise both for our sakes and any leadership that is considering us.

So, as we research various possibilities with James 4:15 in mind, we ask for your patience and your prayers.

In Him, the Jensen family