



**Parish of St. James w Holy Trinity**

Seamer Road Scarborough

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Dear

You will have been wondering what the likelihood is of the 'Encounter Bungoma' visit going ahead in August. Clearly if the trip were planned for the next few months it could not go ahead. However, I am hopeful and positive that by the time a final decision has to be made, things will have improved sufficiently for us still to go. I think the encouraging impact of a visit albeit from a small UK group will be significant and warmly appreciated. But we'll have to be patient and see what happens.

I have two people who have committed themselves to the visit at this stage and various others naturally holding back because of the present uncertainty in Kenya. I would really like to hear from you if you are intending to come in the event of it being safe to do so. If you'd like to talk it over or see some photographs about the visit and the growth of the church in Bungoma I'd be happy to call in or talk on the 'phone. Below I have written a few things for your interest and prayers.

The situation in Kenya generally is precarious, although the media naturally focus on the worst places and events. My friend Simon works in radio in Nairobi and recently returned after a Christmas break. He reports that Nairobi 'is not a cheerful place', tourism has been decimated and violence is erupting in various places not least in the west of Kenya. Bungoma Town, although lying in the west between Kisumu and Eldoret (2 of the hot spots), is now relatively quiet if tense. Many churches in the Diocese are trying to care for displaced people camping in their compounds. St Matthews Webuye (cathedral church of the Diocese) reported having 65 people including 23 children with all their food and medical needs living on their compound. This also brings a security risk and fear of course. The provost The Revd Joseph says 'Thanks great deal for remaining our partner in prayer'.

I have been assured from 2 different sources that tribal divisions are not splitting the church. An email from St James Kimilili reports '*in St James (English Service) on Sunday we sang "I don't care what tribe you belong to, just as long as for Jesus you stand..."*'. In our small (under 100) congregation, we had a number of tribes, including Kikuyu, Teso, Luhya, Luo, Taita .... (Bukusu are Luhya'. I have heard of a vicar from Peterborough who is there in Bungoma this week and is fine, despite having no insurance! The situation is more difficult for the Bishop of Bungoma Rt Revd Eliud Wabukala. As well as being Bishop, he has a role in a number of national church groupings including being chairman of the National Council Churches of Kenya. I saw him on Newsnight recently walking with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, clearly involved in the early attempts to get Kibaki and Odinga talking together. He texted me 2 weeks ago following a meeting of bishops in Nairobi simply saying '*we are in danger, pray for us*'. The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) is probably perceived as supporting the government with it having a key advisory role to the government of Kibaki. The Bishop is a Bukusu, a tribe that has broadly supported the government. Of course the political map is more complex than simply Kikuyu/Kibaki versus Luo/Odinga. Also the election problems have lifted the lid on other divisions and sense of unfairness in Kenyan society. Some violence is linked with land disputes for example. It is true that opposition groups and especially Luos have felt marginalized and excluded from power. It will be a difficult situation to restore, but at least this week Kibaki and Odinga have been seen together and talking.

Every blessing,

Phil