

Bega Kwa Bega

Ambassadorial Visit to Kidamali parish on behalf of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church

July 4, 2017

We left Iringa at 10 a.m. for our 44 kilometer ride to Kidamali. We were accompanied on our drive by Pr. Lusungu Msigwa, BKB director for the Iringa Diocese and our guide and interpreter. The road to Kidamali is gravel, but had been recently redone, so was a pleasure after the many very bumpy dirt roads we have traveled here. The route goes through suburban Iringa and out into the countryside and rural villages, so there is much to see as we drive that direction.

Once we turned off the main road we were met by the pastor and several church leaders, who were singing and dancing to greet us. We headed directly into the pastor's home office, where we signed the guestbook as is the custom. We then joined the pastor and his wife for lunch in their home. (They had a beautiful sectional couch around one corner—one of the nicest we have seen in Tanzania.)

After lunch we walked the short distance to the church for our ambassadorial visit. Although the parish is building a new church, we met in the old one, which they are still using.

Attending the meeting from the Kidamali parish were:

Mchungaji John Kisomo: pastor-in-charge
Mchg. Amidu Msungu: associate pastor
Emiliana Kadinda: Pr. Kisomo's wife
Kodgen Kadiki: evangelist at Kipela preaching point
Jacob Mtingela: evangelist at Mkombe preaching point
Angelica Gindo: evangelist at the main station (Kidamali)
Nicholas Sanga: evangelist at Nyamihuu preaching point
Clemens Kavindi: partnership committee chair
Bartholomew Kisawaga: parish secretary
Agnes Zoni: parish worker
Matiste Kalumba: youth secretary
Joshua Ngavile: youth choir chair
Teo Bweia: elder, main station
Festo Lukosi: elder, Kipela preaching point
Various choir members and church members



Pr. Kisomo opened the meeting with prayer and then a choir sang. In his welcome, the pastor said that they had been praying for a visit from their partner, and appreciated that we had come as ambassadors.

Pr. Msigwa spoke next. He reminded the attendees of the mission of Bega Kwa Bega, explaining generally how the general partnership between the synod and the diocese works as well as the 70 parish partnerships. He spoke of the three pillars that support the partnerships: prayer, presence (visits), and projects done together (e.g., scholarships). He explained that Russ and I were there as ambassadors from Shepherd of the Hills, which has been unable to visit since 2007. We would be bringing a message from Shepherd of the Hills and sending a report back to help support that important pillar.



When it was our turn to introduce ourselves, we included greetings from Bishop Lull and the St. Paul Area Synod as well as from Pr. Peter Harrits, the stateside BKB counterpart of Pr. Msigwa and Julia Hubbard, the onsite Iringa BKB coordinator for almost two years. We also said a bit about our seven visits to Iringa and how grateful we were for the opportunity to serve as ambassadors.

Russ then read your letter, noting that it is now summer in the US though it is winter here. The congregation was very attentive to the information you shared, and really appreciated the post card from Jerusalem of the Lord's Prayer in Swahili.

Pr. Kisomo responded with thanks and prayer for the partnership, emphasizing that they believe their partnership with Shepherd of the Hills is a part of God's plan.

As background, there are 930 members of the church in Kidamali, of which 350 are children. There are four preaching points:

- Kidamali (the main station)
- Nyamihuu
- Kipela, which is small so far
- Mkombe, which worships in a temporary building.
- They are planning a new preaching point, which will be called Gangimali.

The partnership chair then gave the report from Kidamali. He gave his oral report in Swahili, but very impressively, the written report is in English. Kidamali was the 32nd parish that has had an ambassadorial visit, and this is the first report in English. We have included a copy of it in the email with this report.

Mr. Kavindi began also with his thanks for the partnership and for the church leaders both at Shepherd of the Hills and at Kidamali. He said he understands that the partnership is an effort to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

He said that Kidamali appreciates greatly the gifts they have received from their friends at Shepherd of the Hills:

- the scholarships through BKB
- the well at Nyamihuu preaching point through St. Paul Partners

- the \$500 for the roof of the old church that blew off in the storm on Dec. 16.



He referred to a letter they had written to you in May about the drought in the area that has caused a slowdown, or in some cases a stop, to projects they are working on as a congregation, including:

- finishing the new church at the main station, which still needs window glass and a floor
- working on homes for the evangelists at the preaching points
- building a new home for the pastor. They had been in the process of making bricks but had to stop.



Other projects they anticipate in the future, when they recover from the drought and can start up again, include:

- building and starting a kindergarten for parish and town children so they have a place to go during the day
- together with the Iringa Diocese, building a vocational school in Kidamali.

He ended the report by giving thanks again—to God and Shepherd of the Hills—for the partnership.

The pastor then spoke again, saying that the Kidamali church prays for Shepherd of the Hills at their prayer meetings every Thursday and Saturday.

And he reiterated that they would warmly welcome visitors from Shepherd of the Hills and would come to America to visit if they could.

The pastor concluded his remarks by listing the prayer concerns he wanted to send back to you:

- prayers for the finishing of their new building, as their parish is growing in membership because of evangelism, and their current building is too small
- prayers for the continued growth of their membership
- prayers for their vision of a kindergarten for the village
- prayers that their members will be touched to give the money to finish their new church and other projects
- because of the effects of the drought, prayers for those struggling to feed their families and send their children to school.

Finally, Pr. Msigwa thanked the folks at Kidamali for their warm welcome, their preparation, and their participation in the day. And he told them what he tells all partner congregations—that their financial faithfulness and accountability was a main key to the continuation of a successful partnership. He also reminded them that any communication between Kidamali and Shepherd of the Hills should be copied to Pr. Msigwa ([lmsigwa@gmail.com](mailto:msigwa@gmail.com)) and to Bega Kwa Bega (begakwabega@yahoo.com).

Russ then shook hands with the parish leaders and many of the other members, telling them that he would go back as soon as possible to members of Shepherd of the Hills to shake their hands, thus acting as an ambassadorial bridge between the partners.

The meeting closed with a hymn and prayer and pictures—and then, as is the custom, lunch at the pastor's house. All in all, it was a pleasure to spend time in Kidamali with people who are so obviously faithful and appreciative of their partnership with Shepherd of the Hills.





Final thoughts:

We thank you for the opportunity to visit Kidamali parish on behalf of Shepherd of the Hills and meet with the leaders and members there. There is much energy and joy in the leaders, and we very much enjoyed our visit. And while we hope that Shepherd of the Hills can plan a visit to Kidamali soon, we encourage you to continue to use this ambassadorial program until then.

And if we could add to that—it struck us as we prepared for and visited Kidamali that this is a partnership with room for considerable growth. The congregations seem particularly suited to each other in mission, energy, strength of leadership, and commitment to growing God’s kingdom. What is so special and meaningful about the BKB relationships is that they are partnerships and not mission projects. Kidamali is very appreciative of what Shepherd of the Hills has done for them so far, but they would love to have someone visit and experience with them the presence and friendship that a partnership can bring. They would love to feel as if they know you and you know them personally. We were so inspired by our visit and the people of Kidamali. We truly believe that if you could visit you, too, would be inspired and would feel that Kidamali has as much to offer Shepherd of the Hills in this partnership as Shepherd of the Hills has to offer Kidamali.

We hope to see some of you at the Fall Festival in November to shake your hands and complete the bridge.

Blessings to you all at Shepherd of the Hills and to your partner in Kidamali. Asante sana for asking us to visit them.

Jo Whiting and Russ Hilliard
BKB Ambassadors

NOTE OF APPRECIATION TO OUR FRIENDS FROM
THE SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS ST. PAUL AREA SYNOD

Our brethren in Christ, we thank God for the partnership we have in Christ. We thank our parish leaders from the partner congregations of The Shepherd of the Hills and Kidamali for the determinations and efforts to revive our partnership. Let God be praised. We appreciate their endeavours in building God's kingdom on Earth through this partnership.

We always thank God for the gifts you have been offering to us.

We remember the scholarship you are giving to our needy children through Beqa Kwa Beqa Scholarship Programme under which many disadvantaged children have got access to education.

We thank you for the water project you are supporting at Nyamihuu preaching point that the project is in process through St. Paul partners office.

We again thank you for US 500 dollars which you approved to join hands in rehabilitating the roof of the church which was damaged by the storm in December 2016. Thank you for your support.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ, as we informed you in our letter of May 2017, as regards to the threat of drought faced our country and our congregation, the projects which depend on contributions from the Congregands have ceased due to the poor economic situation facing our Congregands.

The projects that have been affected by this situation are:

- Parish Church construction at Kidamali preaching point which is at finishing stage. We are at window fixing stage and floor.
- House construction at Nyamihuu and Kipera preaching points which are at walling stage.
- Parish house construction which is at early stage of brick making.

Visions

Our dears, we have the vision of establishing kindergarten school here at Kidamali. Kidamali area has so many children who have no specific and right place to be nurtured, therefore with this project we will have solved this problem.

Again the Diocese has the vision of constructing Youth Vocational Training Centre to cater for the challenge of unemployment among youths in our area. We pray so that these visions may come true.

We once thank you for the partnership we have for the glory of God.

We, the Parish Management team.



JOHN A KISOUMA - SENIOR

John A. Kisouma

Chairman - CHAIRPERSON FOR PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE