

We thank God for the opportunity to complete the mission that He gave us to conduct four pastoral training institutes and one short seminar in East/Central/Southern Africa over a period of four weeks. Training Pastors International (TPI) sent three different pastoral training teams from the United States, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Malawi to conduct these pastoral training institutes in Kitale, Kenya [264 pastors]; Harare, Zimbabwe [124 pastors]; Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo [368 pastors]; and Mponela-Dowa, Malawi [142 pastors]. We also did a short one-day seminar in Lumakanda, Kenya [103 pastors]. **We trained a total of 1,001 pastors and evangelists at the four institutes and one seminar** in the areas of Expository Preaching, Survey of the Old Testament and New Testament, Principles of Biblical Leadership, Jesus' Model of Leadership Development, Evangelism and Missions, Survey of Theology, The Sanctification of the Believer, Church Administration, Exposition of Philippians, and Exposition of Prayer. Furthermore, **we gave out 782 certificates to those pastors who completed the whole program each week. We also thank the Lord for the three pastoral training teams that joined me in training these 1,001 pastors.** In the first week (Kitale, Kenya), Wally Gilmer from Stallings, N.C., joined me in teaching Survey of Theology and Exposition of Philippians. In the second week (Harare, Zimbabwe), Jennifer Balmer from Lynchburg, VA., joined me in teaching Church Administration and Joseph William from Harare, Zimbabwe, joined me in teaching Jesus' Model of Leadership Development. In the third week (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo), Michael Fondren from Indianapolis, Indiana, joined me in teaching Survey of Theology and Exposition of Prayer and Nepa Wa Msambelwa from Kinshasa, DR Congo, joined me in teaching Principles of Biblical Leadership. In the fourth week (Mponela-Dowa, Malawi), Jennifer Balmer joined me in teaching Church Administration and Glyn Mittawa from Lilongwe, Malawi, joined me in teaching Principles of Biblical Leadership.

We saw 113 people saved during our African Summer Mission Trip to the four countries, including a total of about 22 pastors or evangelists during the 4 weeks of our institutes. Many of our pastors have not received a clear presentation of the gospel message, so we rejoice in the salvation of these pastors and evangelists. We also saw many pastors or evangelists surrender to the Lord in some aspect of their lives or ministries, which was an added bonus of God's grace displayed during our time in these countries. Please rejoice with us in how God truly helped us to gain the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We therefore give God all the glory for what He accomplished through us so that many pastors were equipped for their ministries, and thus, the Church in Africa was built up more solidly on the foundation of Jesus Christ and is better able to complete the Great Commission.

Every year we face different challenges as we seek to provide pastoral training to pastors in these twenty countries in Africa. This year we faced some spiritual warfare in many various forms, even before we left on our trip to Africa. Pastor Michael Fondren, an African American Pastor of Evangelism and Prayer at Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, made the comment to me that he has never experienced the severity of spiritual warfare like he went through in preparation for the third week of our Summer Missions Trip for our TPI Institute in Kinshasa, DR Congo. He has faced much spiritual warfare in inner city ministries in Indianapolis, but the attacks from the Evil One were severe, so he mobilized a prayer team from his church, who were praying daily for his trip to Kinshasa, a city of 12 million people where there is very little Biblical training for pastors.

The first challenge we faced was in getting our Dem. Rep. of Congo (DRC) visas that we had to have to get into the country. We were told that there were major delays in getting DRC visas this year due to several political factors having to do with the relations between the U.S. and the DRC. Our visa courier told us to move our visa applications to their office in New York City, hoping that this would enable us to get the visas in a more expeditious manner. We tried for over a month to get our visas for three of the team members going to Africa this summer, but the Congolese Consulate kept delaying us in approving our visas despite many calls to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kinshasa, DR Congo. Then we came down to the final week before I left for Africa on Thursday, July 21st, and since we still did

not have our visas, we were looking to pull out our passports from the Congolese Consulate office, thus aborting our visa application process completely, and cancel the DRC TPI Institute, and possibly start all over with offering a TPI Institute during that third week in Chipata, Zambia, even though there were close to 350 pastors waiting for us to come to Kinshasa for the training of their pastors. We were told by our courier in New York City that we would not get the visas until Wednesday afternoon (one day before I flew out on Thursday morning), and they would fly my passport to the Charlotte Douglas Airport by the time I take off at 4 AM on Thursday, but we told them, "No!" We said to the Lord that Tuesday is the last day for us to get the visas, and if You Lord cannot get our visas for us by then, we will cancel the DRC TPI Institute and get our passports out, and replace it with a Zambia institute for that week, but if You Lord give us our visas in time, we will be careful to give You all the credit! We got word that the New York courier received the DRC visas at 4 PM Tuesday, who got it out of the Congolese Consulate one hour before closing time, and he overnighted it to us on Wednesday morning just prior to our leaving on our trip to Charlotte, N. C. The Lord truly tested our faith and the Devil tried to keep us from going to the DRC, but God gave us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Praise God with us and pray for us as we continue to step out in faith and obedience.

The Devil also attacked all three of us as we flew to Kinshasa, DR Congo by messing up our flight schedules. Pastor Michael Fondren's first leg from Indianapolis to Chicago, IL was canceled due to mechanical problems, and the first leg of the flight for Jennifer and me from Harare, Zimbabwe to Johannesburg, South Africa was delayed for the same reason. As a result, all three of us arrived one day late, and our TPI National Director, Nepa Wa Msambelwa, waited for us at the Kinshasa International Airport for 11 hours since he did not get my email about our flight delays, and therefore, deduced that we had canceled the institute due to some complications. The next day, however, all three of us arrived safely in the Kinshasa airport even though none of our bags or boxes of notebooks arrived with us. Immediately upon arrival, I was invited to preach in Nepa's Church, Bible Faith Church, a very poor church in the Mpsa I Village, which is a rural area in the outskirts of the city. We arrived very late on Sunday afternoon around 2:30PM, but the church service waited all day for our arrival, and we enjoyed a great day of worship, had a great opportunity to preach the gospel message from Heb. 7:25, and saw 52 people come to faith in Christ for their salvation. We were so excited to see how the Lord gave us the victory over the Devil and also gave us this huge harvest of souls to demonstrate that He is in fact totally in charge throughout this whole process!

There are oftentimes difficult contextual or political situations that form the background of our institute that we may or may not know about before we get there that can bring into the equation several problematic factors that can inhibit the overall effectiveness of our training program. That was the case that we encountered at our Harare, Zimbabwe Institute during the second week of our Summer TPI Missions Trip. There was a major political situation that formed the context for our TPI Harare Institute that factored into why many of the pastors who had pre-registered for the TPI institute did not come to our program that week. Pastor Joseph William, our TPI Zimbabwe National Director, told us beforehand that we had more than 200 to 250 pastors, evangelists, and other church planters or national missionaries planning to attend the institute with great eagerness, but quite a large number of them did not attend because of what happened just weeks prior to our event. About three weeks prior to our institute, several Zimbabwean pastors and other protestors had demonstrated against the president of the country of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, who was then 92 years old and was in his 36th year as president, and these pastors called for his resignation as president since he was not able any longer to deal with the nation's crumbling economy. As one Zimbabwean economist said, "This anger is caused by the fact that there is no money and the government is not able to pay its workers since the government and country are broke." In Zimbabwe, most employers pay their employees through government checks, so the money essentially comes through the government. The economic decline is further complicated by the fact that the unemployment rate is over 90%, so most Zimbabweans do not have formal employment and rely exclusively on what they can make on the streets for what little they have to sell informally. This phenomenon is further complicated by the government's import ban, cash shortages even in the banks where people wait in long lines outside and down the block just to get at the most \$200 US dollars, and massive job losses throughout the country, which has caused great poverty for most Zimbabweans since they cannot pay for their own living expenses and there is even rampant starvation in some parts of the country.

As a result of the protest in the streets in Harare where the protestors called for workers to stay home from their jobs, which ended up shutting down the capital and many other cities in Zimbabwe, these pastors were arrested and put into prison. The US and French ambassadors said the pastors had the right to demonstrate and should not have been arrested, and they both concurred that the pastors were right and said that the president should step down. As a result, the president was very angry at the United States and France and even threatened the pastors in Zimbabwe to have nothing to do with this demonstration or they too will be arrested and put into prison. There was therefore a fear among many of the Zimbabwean pastors that any Americans coming to Zimbabwe might have a political agenda against the government, and if they come to an event like our TPI pastoral training institute three weeks later, they could get mixed up in it and be arrested themselves. We also had quite a few active military, police, and prison chaplains, who also serve as pastors of churches, who were pre-registered to attend our institute, but backed out of coming to our TPI institute because of these disconcerting factors. Many other pastors followed suit and did not come for the same reason. Consequently, we started our TPI institute in Harare with only 75 pastors and ended up with 124 pastors, but most of them said to us that there would have been many more who would have come if they knew the quality of this program and the situation had not been so bad in the city with all the swirling threats coming from the president's office.

On the last day of the TPI Harare Institute, we had a special visit from the Honorable Rev. Miriam R. Chikukwa, who is the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs for Metropolitan Harare (similar to a mayor in the US, except she is appointed by the President). She got up and spoke for a while and gave about three messages since she is also a pastor of a church here in Harare and a great philanthropist as well. It was a great time to have the Provincial Minister there, and I could see that it meant a lot to Pastor Joseph William for her to be in his church, especially since he has a close relationship with the government since his church is on land that the government has given him to lease and he has designs to develop a close relationship with government leaders like this lady to develop his ministry in future years. After the Provincial Minister finished her talk and greeting and before she left our assembly, she gave us an invitation to come over to her office in the city later in the day to visit her after the TPI institute was finished for the day.

Later in the day (4 PM), we traveled into the City Centre of Harare and went to the Provincial Minister's office and met with Miriam R. Chikukwa after a short delay. She quickly introduced us to the national television station correspondents, a female cameraman and a male interviewer, who first did an interview of me about Training Pastors International and the significance of our training program for the pastors in this city. He also asked me about what I thought about the political situation with the pastors not supporting the president, and I told him that we do not get into any political matters with our TPI institutes, but only stick to helping pastors prepare for their ministry by preaching the Word of God and leading their churches. They also interviewed Pastor Joseph William for a couple of minutes, and finally interviewed Miriam R. Chikukwa, the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs for Metropolitan Harare, while Jennifer Balmer sat at her side. The Provincial Minister spoke of how TPI is really involved in teaching the Word of God and not getting involved in politics, which she followed by saying other pastors in this city should do the same thing. The main theme of the TV interview was to clearly show that our TPI ministry was in town to focus on God's Word and stay out of politics, which is a very big issue in the city right now since some pastors have been arrested around July 12th for demonstrating against the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe (92 years old), and calling for his resignation as president, saying it was time for him to step down.

The TPI interview was broadcast on the National Television (ZBC), whereby the coverage was nationwide and the message was well received throughout the country where we have held many TPI institutes. It widened awareness for the TPI program in Zimbabwe and also provided some advice to local pastors and church leaders to concentrate on leading the church, preaching the gospel, and winning souls for Christ, and not to be too much involved in politics. According to our National Director, Joseph William, several people and pastors came to see him at his office and thanked me for that helpful interview. It gave some direction to the currently experienced political crisis in all of Zimbabwe as many pastors were now trying to move away from their main mission of teaching and preaching the Word of God, and they were now focusing on politics. But as Joseph reported to me, "my message in the interview

was good and helpful. This was a key message that was well received, and it was time specific and helpful advice to many pastors who watched it throughout the whole country.”

Finally, we had four great institutes and a one-day seminar, which the Lord used to help train many pastors throughout Central, East, and Southern Africa, who normally never would get the opportunity to receive Biblical instruction since they cannot afford to get this training due to their austere living conditions and sometimes difficult political situations. For instance, we held the TPI Kitale, Kenya, Institute each day on the property of Grace of Calvary Baptist Church in the Maili Saba area of Kitale, which is in a rural setting containing donkeys, cows, chickens, hens, and other of God’s creatures milling around all the time. Since this church is a one-room mud structure that could contain no more than 50 people, and there are no other bigger facilities in this small town, the local team of about 25 leaders on the committee headed up by Martin Kiniahi, the pastor of this church, rented five tents with the monies that Pastor Wally Gilmer raised to pay for this expense just like the Lumakanda team had done in three previous TPI institutes. We were told by several local leaders that this training program for pastors was the first of its kind for pastors in this area, and that most of the pastors except for a handful had never received any formal training prior to this week. One pastor told me that many people in this city will come to Christ as a result of this teaching for the pastors, and many non-church going people in this area have already taken notice of this large gathering of pastors, and will want to know more about this historic meeting in their city that could change the future legacy of Christianity in this city and region of Northwest Kenya.

At our One-Day Seminar in Lumakanda, Kenya, I was especially touched by the testimony of Ibrahim Mutange, who is a former Muslim Imam (teacher in a mosque), and now converted to Christ as a result of losing his two teenage sons in a motorbike accident several years ago. He became disillusioned with the leadership of the Muslim mosque when they showed no remorse for his plight, and at the same time, the churches in Lumakanda who had been united in their fervor for sharing the gospel of Christ by attending three TPI institutes over the past five years (2010, 2012, 2014), reached out to him and showed him the love of Christ over a period of time through their care and concern, and eventually preached the gospel to him. He now lives in the church and cares for the property at Lumakanda Baptist Church, but has such a sweet disposition since he lost everything in the service of the Muslim faith and gained a whole new life in Christ, and now serves in the preaching of the gospel of Christ and in the ministry of Christ as a pastor.

We thank God and give Him all the glory for all those who helped us with their prayers and gifts to send us to four countries to offer training in these four pastoral training institutes for these pastors, who have no way or finances to get it. You have helped to provide this training to them, and God will use it to multiply His kingdom throughout East/Central/Southern Africa so that many may come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Please continue to pray for these pastors as they implement this training in their lives and ministries. Please pass this synopsis on to others that they may see God’s work in Africa as well.

May the Lord bless you, your family, and church as you have helped us to complete this crucial mission assignment to train these indigenous pastors in Africa where the challenge is greatly needed to equip pastors to produce Great Commission churches in the land.

Yours for Christ and His Kingdom,

John M. Balmer, Jr.
Training Pastors International
President and Founder