

Methodist pastor spends time traveling in Africa

Written by Chris Lee

First United Methodist Church pastor Paul Sung recently spent 18 days traveling around parts of Africa ordaining ministers and spreading God's word.

"It was a wonderful experience," Sung said.

After flying into Johannesburg, South Africa Aug. 9, Sung spent the first part of his trip working as part of Every Home for Christ (EHC). This was a week-long experience in Zambia.

Sung traveled with a pastor from Memphis, Tenn. who was experiencing his first trip overseas. The duo, along with EHC staff, ordained nearly 80 pastors while in Africa.

Sung spent his time handing out gospel booklets to people in Anglo-Africa and French-Africa, praying with them and blessing them.

In 1946, a young Canadian pastor by the name of Jack McAlister encouraged his radio audience to help provide gospel literature to missionaries. To further coordinate the placement of millions of booklets in countries around the globe, he founded what is known today as Every Home for Christ.

More than 566 million people live in an estimated 114 million homes in Anglo-Africa. Every Home for Christ workers have shared more than 84 million gospel booklets in the region.

French-Africa is home to 200 million people in 35 million homes. Workers have shared over 19.8 million gospel booklets there.

Since 1953, EHC staff and volunteers have systematically and strategically taken over 2.7 billion gospel messages to over 1.2 billion homes worldwide.

Sung was given the opportunity to help prepare a meal for 300 people while working for EHC. He described it as cooking with large pots and lots of corn mash. This was all done outside

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under a small awning or shelter.

He noted although the Zambians are extremely poor, they are all in good spirits and very, very friendly.

After returning to Johannesburg, Sung traveled to Nairobi, Kenya where he spent time speaking to and working with the Masai people, a group of about 300,000. They live near the border between Kenya and Tanzania. Sung said he took a seven-hour jeep ride from Nairobi to Tanzania and described it as seven hours of bumps and rattling.

Sung described the Masai people as really tall and really thin. Another observation he was fascinated with was the posture of the people. He said they stood and walked extremely straight. From this posture derived Masai shoes made in Switzerland, according to Sung.

While working with them he stayed in a really small traditional house. He said it was very tough to sleep because of the tight space and also, the family kept their goat close by.

The pastor said President Barack Obama's photo could be found all around Kenya as that is where his father was born. Sung noted the people were very proud of the connection to the U.S. president.

One of Sung's highlights from the African trip was visiting Victoria Falls located on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe. The falls are considered by many as part of the seven wonders of the world.

Sung said this is a must stop for those visiting the country. He encourages anyone with the chance to visit Africa to make this a stop on their list.

Another highlight was the number of people he had the chance to meet and talk with. On the trip over he met a doctor who was traveling to visit and help her sister who was also a doctor in

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Zimbabwe.

While praying with and blessing the African people, he also had a lot of time to just talk with them. "African people are so kind," Sung said.

Sung met a lawyer from St. Louis, Mo. who was traveling with his wife to visit an orphanage they started three years ago. The man and his wife travel to Africa every year to visit the orphanage. They noted they run into many of the same people each year who save up money just to travel to the orphanage to meet the couple.

Sung said it was fun to watch the children play soccer and noted many of them did so without shoes.

While in Africa, Sung spoke to large crowds on three different occasions. An interpreter was needed while he was preaching to the Masai people. This wasn't as bad as imagined since Sung has served as an interpreter himself.

While in Zambia, he spoke to a crowd of nearly 400 people and explained it as a great experience. He also mentioned the crowd of people was very good at signing and had wonderful voices.

One thing Sung feels really bad about is the fact that he didn't take gifts for those he visited. Other pastors had gifts to hand out which is a custom practiced by those visiting the African people. Sung said he didn't know about this and felt extremely bad about it.

He explained that the next time he visits he will go above and beyond with gifts. He said it won't be long before he goes back. This was his first trip to Africa and is ready to go back.

"It was a life-changing experience," the pastor said.

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