

BGCT joins Waxahachie congregation to provide relief in Kenya

February 26, 2017

WAXAHACHIE—When Vaughn Ross, a missions committee member at First Baptist Church in Waxahachie, received word from a pastor in Nairobi that a three-year drought in North Central Kenya was transitioning from severe to acute, he reached out to his congregation and Texas Baptists for support.

Simon Mwangi, pastor of Koinonia Baptist Church in Nairobi, reported a need for immediate intervention for close to 54,000 Samburu people facing starvation. Koinonia Church and First Baptist in Waxahachie have a partnership to minister to the Samburu people in Maralal, a hillside town in northern Kenya.

Lack of rainfall

Most of the semi-permanent water sources and pastures in North Central Kenya have dried up, and many livestock are dying after the brief rains of October failed to fall, Mwangi said.



Vaughn Ross and his wife served as International Mission Board missionaries in Kenya from the mid-1970s until

the early 1990s. While people living in the semi-arid region are accustomed to many months without water, three years without adequate rain has caused extreme devastation. Men in the tribe are traveling for days, seeking water and forage for their livestock, leaving women and children at home with little-to-no resources.

First Baptist in Waxahachie is sending \$10,000 to Koinonia Church, including \$2,700 designated by the Christian Life Commission and its community care ministry from Baptist General Convention of Texas Cooperative Program funds, to help meet immediate needs in Maralal.

Koinonia Church will use the money to purchase corn, rice, beans and cooking oil in neighboring cities. Then the church will transport the supplies to Maralal, and leaders of 14 church plants will distribute them to assist 400 households, home to about 3,200 people.

Leaders are praying the food will help families survive through March before anticipated rains come in April, Ross said.

Texas Baptists partner with Waxahachie congregation

“We are so thankful Dr. Ross and the First Baptist Church of Waxahachie missions committee brought this crisis to our attention,” said Ali Hearon, director of hunger and care ministries with the CLC.

“What a blessing it is to partner with First Baptist Waxahachie and Koinonia Baptist Church of Nairobi to provide food to the Samburu people. As followers of Christ, we must be quick to respond to our brothers and sisters in crisis.”

Ross and his wife served as International Mission Board missionaries in Kenya from the mid-1970s until the early 1990s, when the Samburu were identified as an unreached people group. They helped start the first church—Maralal Church—which has, in turn, planted many churches in

the region. They returned to the states several years later, but always held a love for the Samburu people.

In 2014, First Baptist in Waxahachie began a partnership with Koinonia Church to provide literacy and church leadership training for new church plants in Maralal, 250 miles from Nairobi. First Baptist sends teams each year to provide pastor training, women's ministry, youth ministry and evangelism. Koinonia Church also sends about nine teams a year to work with the Samburu people.

Kenyan partnership significant

There are no Baptist missionaries in the region, which makes the partnership between the Waxahachie congregation and Koinonia Church even more significant, Ross noted.

"This is an equal and mature partnership in ministry between two churches, which allows both of us to fulfill our Great Commission goals," said Ross. "We knew going into this there would be great benefits to both churches. One of them is learning to love across cultures. We have become deeply in love with them, and they have with us. It also allows us to experience the fullness of church—the body of Jesus—as partners in ministry around the world."

Ross is also thankful for the joint support from First Baptist in Waxahachie and Texas Baptists to respond to the dire need.

"Our church participates in giving to the BGCT Cooperative Program and other areas of ministry," Ross said "We have taken this project on ourselves and ask others to join us if they are willing and able. It's good to see CP funds applied directly to an area where we ministering."

Ross and members of First Baptist in Waxahachie are praying for the anticipated rains to come soon to provide relief to the region. They also

plan to send a mission team later this year to continue their work ministering and sharing the gospel to the Samburu people.