

## Stephen and Angelina Cowan

**OCTOBER 2021**

Location: **Tuum, KENYA**

Mission: **Church-based community development and outreach**



### **Journey interrupted**

The young men running alongside our landrover in which we were travelling through the village frantically flagged us down. 'Don't you hear the gunshots?' No, we hadn't, but when the engine and two noisy 'air conditioning' fans were hastily turned off we were immediately aware of the, now, very loud volleys from behind the houses on both sides of the road. Each increasingly nearby burst created a wave of fear and movement throughout the huddle of women and children, and after a few minutes we joined most of the villagers as they took cover on verandas and within the flimsy structures. We watched and waited as over the next hour the cattle raid continued all around. I peered into the darkness of our 'host's home. Two elderly men and many small toddlers crouched on a low bench in the corner, the whites of their eyes exhibiting fear, their posture resignation. There was nowhere to go. We shared their vulnerability. Time moved slowly, but eventually, when there was more silence than noise, we were assured it was safe to move on. The last three hours of the journey were uneventful. Never have I been so glad to see Tuum! We can find interruptions frustrating or frightening. Jesus often reacted unexpectedly to them, but He utilised each one perfectly. Our interruption had passed but during the next few days we attempted to convey to the people of Tuum the care and concern shown to us by a perceived 'enemy' village, the futility of the raid, the risk of possible counterattack and the increasing need for reconciliation and lifestyle change.

### **Pastoralism interrupted**

The land is dry and the animals are many, too many for a semi desert area. As the herders seek desperately for more pasture, illegal 'walk ons' have continued in the ranching belt south of us. Such incidents, and those resultant

government law enforcement actions all too often end in destruction of property and loss of human and animal life and create anger and confusion. As legal demarcation of lands rapidly moves towards the Tuum/Nyiro/Ndoto areas, the pastoralist people of the area, whose traditional perspective is that Nkai (god) has gifted the land and animals to them, risk losing access to the extensive plains they have freely roamed for generations.

One of our recent visitors, a pastoralist elder from another area, generously gave of his time and knowledge during a public baraza to answer questions and share the experience of his community's journey to establish legal rights to their land.

### **Kenya interrupted**

Covid-19 continues to play havoc affecting education, tourism, businesses and lives. Its presence is inevitably being identified in the north. Stigma and fear remain. The monthly teaching seminar is centred on the interest that Jesus has in all aspects of our lives and encourages hygiene and vigilance. Each month more men are attending, drawn at first by their interest in improving their stock line by using new bulls.



*Journey resumed*

### **Prayer points**

- Give thanks that there was no reported loss of life in the raid, sadly not usually the case.
- Pray for wise and courageous leaders to rise in this community and a willingness by people to listen to new ideas and advice.
- Pray the seminar participants will relay back to their villages both covid precautions and cattle information.