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TPI Africa Trip Report 1

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Fri, Jul 9, 2010 at 1:09 PM

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you from Eldoret, Kenya, where we are beginning our first Pastoral Training Institute for our TPI Summer Missions Trip 2010. I had a rather uneventful trip to Kenya until I arrived in London, England and did not find my pastoral training colleague from Memphis, Tennessee, Paul Swets. He had a very eventful excursion, which I will describe later, but I am happy to declare that he has now safely arrived in Eldoret himself, albeit with no bags or boxes of notebooks for the week.

John Balmer

A note from Jennifer – This journal chronicles John's uneventful flights and travel to Eldoret, Kenya, and the more interesting travails of Paul Swets..

Even after next to no sleep, John preached in a church on Sunday; 3 people were saved and 40 more came forward during the invitation.

I received word that the luggage and boxes of notebooks were in Nairobi, Kenya, and should be in Eldoret by Friday. This is great, because John and Paul will be traveling to Tanzania over the weekend. Please pray for their safety, that the bags and boxes will make it easily through customs, and that the missing pieces will indeed make it to Eldoret before they leave.

Here is John's journal of the events and thoughts that have taken place each day.

This begins the fuller missions journal:

We began our TPI Summer Missions Trip on Friday, July 2nd when Jennifer and I finished packing

my bags and doing many last-minute errands and necessary logistical tasks one has to accomplish before undertaking a six-week missions trip like this in Central/East/ Southern Africa to seek to provide six pastoral training institutes for around 1400 to 1500 pastors in six countries. I received my Passport yesterday with five of my six visas in it, missing only Zimbabwe, which I hope to get when I arrive in that country in August. I also withdrew from the bank the initial installment of the money that we will need to cover the six TPI budgets from each of the six countries we will conduct institutes, which are Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. I also went to the UPS Store and with the help of Rhudy Camper, packed up the 250 boxes of Tanzania notebooks and certificates that the team of ladies from our church along with Cathy Connolly helped to print and produce earlier this week. Then Jennifer and I packed all the bags and boxes into our 1992 White Lincoln Town Car and drove from our house in Lynchburg, Virginia for four hours to Washington Dulles International Airport, making only one stop at a gas station to get some Subway sandwiches and drinks and potato chips for the trip. When we arrived a little after 6:15 PM, I got my bags and boxes on a pull cart, said my goodbyes to Jennifer for the next six weeks, and proceeded into the airport to begin the checking-in process for my first flight to London, England.

Meanwhile, Jennifer drove all the way down I-81 South to Blountville, Tennessee to Bobby Ferguson's church, where she arrived at 1 AM very tired from the journey to say the least. The next day she left certificates and details for Bobby Ferguson, who will be our last pastoral trainer that will come to Southern Africa in August. She also left the certificates for Scott Girard, our second pastoral trainer from Charlotte, North Carolina, so Bobby Ferguson's son could take them along with the TPI notebooks for Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to Charlotte to get them to Scott Girard so he will have them for his trip later this month. Then Jennifer went to spend the weekend with her family in Arden, North Carolina.

Once I got my bag and three boxes checked in at the British Air counter, I proceeded through the security checkpoint to my gate at Washington Dulles International Airport and waited for my flight. I boarded British Air Flight BA 264 at 8:45 PM, leaving Washington D.C. for the first leg of my excursion to Eldoret, Kenya. I sat next to a Dutch American lady in her early 70's, Joyce Van Tassel Baska from Gainesville, Virginia, who was on her way to Singapore for a ten-day business trip. After a safe take-off and some water and snacks and tomato juice, I ate my dinner, which consisted of beef, potatoes, and vegetables, a salad, some sort of concoction of hash, bread, and a parfait dessert along with tea and soft drinks. Then I settled down to a long evening flight over the Atlantic Ocean, watching a classic movie, *Shawshank Redemption*, catching up on the news, reading a newspaper, and getting catnaps throughout the night. We finally had a short breakfast snack, which was a delicious muffin and an orange juice and tea. Then we landed with a hard landing a little early in London, England at 8:30 AM on [Saturday, July 3rd](#) at London Heathrow International Airport.

We deboarded the plane into a bus and drove over to the main terminal and began a rather lengthy process of making my way through two security checkpoints in the airport and finally made it to Terminal 5 to my gate to board my second flight to Nairobi, Kenya. The plan was to get there early enough to meet Paul Swets, the former Pastor of Congregational Care at Second Presbyterian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, at the gate so we could talk a little together and get our wits about us before making the second leg of the journey. Paul had left earlier yesterday afternoon from Memphis to Dallas International Airport in Dallas, Texas before boarding a British Air flight from Dallas to London, arriving before me at the gate, or so I thought. When I arrived at the gate, they

had just begun the boarding process of the British Air flight to Nairobi, so I went through and got my ticket checked, and then waited for almost everyone to come through the boarding process, looking for Paul Swets as each person got on the bus to take us to the plane. I could not find him anywhere, so I finally got on the second bus as one of the last ones on that bus, and boarded British Air Flight BA 65 at 10:20 AM, leaving London, England for the second leg of my excursion to Eldoret, Kenya with no knowledge of whether Paul Swets was on this flight.

When I got on the plane, I quickly got one of the flight attendants to check the flight list of the plane to see if in fact Paul Swets was on the plane since I could not find him by sight (especially since I had not met him in person), and where he might be located in the plane since he is my colleague and we had not connected yet. He went and checked that out and then even announced his name over the intercom to get him to make himself known to one of the flight attendants so they could locate him for me. Then the flight attendant came back to me and told me that he was not on the passenger list for the flight and that no one answered the page that was given just before take-off. It was then that I realized that Paul Swets was not on this flight and wondered where he was and what happened to him. I asked the flight attendant if they could still contact the ground crew in London to see if he was still there, but he informed me that they are no longer in contact with the ground crew, and that I would have to wait until I got to Nairobi, Kenya to search any further for him. I was left with my thoughts, wondering if he did not get on the flight since we did not meet up as planned and was still sitting at the terminal looking for me, but I was hoping that this was not the reason for him not being on the plane. Then my mind raced a thousand places trying to figure out what went wrong, but I just prayed and asked the Lord to overrule in this situation and somehow to get us re-connected again soon in Nairobi, Kenya, wondering when would be the next flight there to Nairobi and if Paul would find it without my help in the matter. I felt helpless just sitting there with no knowledge of where he might be or what the problem was to keep him from getting on the plane. This is the first time that this has ever happened where I could not get connected to one of my colleagues on the trip to Africa! I wondered if this was another of the Devil's tricks to thwart the TPI Eldoret, Kenya Institute since Paul Swets was not only our other pastoral trainer other than me, but he also had all the Kenya notebooks with him. I finally decided that there was nothing I could do about it now as the plane took off without Paul Swets on it, and we began the longer second half of the journey to Kenya.

I sat next to Pablo Pelegrin and his mother, Rosa Boillos, who were Spaniards from Barcelona, Spain, on their way to a three-week safari vacation in Kenya and Tanzania seeing three different animal parks. Soon after take-off, I had water, tomato juice and a snack before I ate my dinner, which consisted of a no-meat lasagna pasta, a salad, bread, and a parfait dessert along with tea and soft drinks. Then I settled down to a long evening flight south over Europe and the Sahara Desert all the way to Kenya, watching a classic movie, Titanic, catching up on the news, reading a newspaper, and getting catnaps throughout the night. We had a short lunch snack just before arriving, which was a chicken salad sandwich and a soft drink and tea. Then we finally landed a little late in Nairobi, Kenya at 9:15 PM at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

We deboarded the plane and walked along the tarmac after I was told by one of the flight attendants to contact the British Air staff inside the terminal to find out more of Paul Swets whereabouts. I walked into the terminal and did not find any British Air personnel, so I proceeded to go to Passport Control to get my Passport visa validated. I then asked someone there about locating the British Air staff and was told to go back into the terminal and find them at Gate 14. So I

backtracked again back into the terminal from whence I came and went to Gate 14 and was told by the British Air agents at the gate that I needed to go to the Swissport office at the Baggage Claim area downstairs. I then went back to the Passport Control area and got my visa validated, and then went downstairs to retrieve my bags and boxes, which I received all intact immediately when I arrived there. Praise the Lord for that good piece of news. Then I went over to the Swissport office to question whether they knew anything about Paul Swets, but soon realized that I was again at the wrong place because this office only looks and deals with lost baggage claims, and I was glad to not have that problem. Then I went through customs, talking with a Christian agent about our TPI Institute in Eldoret, Kenya, and then finally exited out of green zone into the reception area of the airport, where I met the African team of key leaders, including Pastor Martin Shikuku and his wife Anne, Charles Karuru and his wife Beatrice, Japheth Koech, and the driver, James Macharia. They were wondering where my colleague was and even doubted that I was the right person when they saw me inside the customs area since they only saw one person. I then told them of the grave situation that I never met up with Paul Swets as planned in the London Heathrow International Airport, and that I have no idea where he is and what happened to him.

Three of the men on the team, Martin Shikuku, Charles Karuru, and Japheth Koech went with me and we decided to go over to Building One across the street and rolled my cart over there to seek to find the British Air personnel at the departure terminal preparing for another British Air flight departing later this evening. I went into the terminal by myself and initially talked to one of the agents about the whereabouts of Paul Swets and was informed that for security reasons they could not verify anything about his travel arrangements, including whether he had been on my flight or where he might be right now. They told me that I could talk to the British Air duty manager, which I did after a short wait, and she could only tell me that the Dallas, Texas to London, England flight arrived late into London at about 9 AM this morning, and that likely he did not have enough time to pass through the security checks in London Heathrow International Airport in order to make the British Air flight to Nairobi, Kenya. She also told me that there were two other flights that he could have been placed on to make the trip here. One was the Kenya Air flight from London to Nairobi, which was supposed to arrive the same time as my flight, but it was doubtful that he was on that flight since the flight was full. There was one more flight, Virgin Atlantic Flight VS 671, which is left London tonight and would arrive in Nairobi at 7:50 AM tomorrow morning. She said he would likely be put on this flight since British Air has a relationship with them. So I went out of the departure terminal to my waiting African hosts and told them of the more updated options that now seemed to have caused Paul Swets to miss the flight. I told them that somehow Paul's flight that originated in America arrived late to London, and that he did not make my flight to Nairobi, Kenya. I also told them that there was a possibility that he could be on the Kenya air flight that was supposed to land about the same time as my flight. So we took the cart back to the arrival terminal and looked for any indication that he was on the flight, but learned that the Kenya Air flight was late and would not arrive for another 45 minutes or so.

We therefore decided to walk back over to the van that the team had hired to drive us to Eldoret, Kenya tonight and meet up with the women and driver, deposit my bags and boxes into the van, and go over to the departure terminal again and get some African Chi (tea) while we waited for the Kenya Air flight to arrive just before midnight tonight. Martin Shikuku, Charles Karuru, Japheth Koech, and I went to the café adjoined to the departure terminal and ordered some African Chi, talked with one another, watched some of the World Cup Soccer Tournament, where I learned that Ghana had lost in the Quarterfinals to Uruguay on Penalty Kicks 4-2. After awhile, we ventured back over to the arrival terminal and found out that the Kenya Air Flight was not due to arrive until 2:30 AM. It was now midnight and the Eldoret, Kenya team had left Eldoret early this morning and

were tired, and I was also exhausted from two long flights and the frantic search for Paul Swets, and we still had a five-hour drive from Nairobi to Eldoret to make during the night. So we contacted one of the customs agents inside the Arrivals Hall, and gave him Paul Swets name on a piece of paper and Martin Shikuku's phone number to call us if he arrived there later this morning, and he agreed to do this and tell Paul not to leave the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport if he arrived there later this morning.

Then we all went back to the van and loaded up and told the ladies of our new plan. It was now 12:30 AM on [Sunday, July 4th](#), and we finally left Jomo Kenyatta International Airport without Paul Swets or the knowledge if he was on a flight to Nairobi, Kenya tonight or tomorrow morning. We drove into the city of Nairobi and went to a gas station to get a new van since the old van might not be suitable for the trip for some reason. We changed vans at the North Rift Shuttle travel service at a gas station called Oil Lybia, and reloaded all the bags and boxes into the new van and departed on our long journey yet to Eldoret, Kenya. We first stopped at a café in town and bought some food because the African team was quite hungry since they hardly ate much food during the day. I too was quite hungry and got a hotdog and a Coke Light (Diet Coke), and we all took our food into the van and departed on our trip at about 1 AM. We ate our food in the van and eventually left the outskirts of Nairobi and drove due west on the road toward Uganda. I was in the front passenger seat and could not sleep much at all during the trip because the last time I fell asleep on a nighttime excursion like this, we ended up in a crash into a tree in the rural parts of Nigeria. So I was wide awake much of the night, making sure that the driver was awake and keen at the wheel. It was a bumpy road for some of the drive since it looked like they had buried elephants in the road, but much of the drive was along a good smooth and even road through much of the interior of Kenya. We went through two major cities, Naivasha and Nakuru, but most of the time we went through nameless villages in the dark of night, and finally arrived in the city of Eldoret, Kenya at 6:00 AM. So I was glad to finally bring this long excursion to Africa to an end after a four-hour drive from Lynchburg, Virginia to Washington, DC, a two-and-a-half-hour wait in Washington Dulles International Airport, a seven-hour flight to London, England (including losing five more hours to GMT Time), a one-and-a-half-hour layover in London Heathrow International Airport, an eight-and-a-half-hour flight to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya (losing two more hours to GMT Time), a three-and-a-half-hour search for Paul Swets at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, and a five-and-a-half-hour drive from the Nairobi Airport to Eldoret, Kenya (nine hours of travel and uncertainty after two long flights and a drive in the United States). [The total trip time was 32.5 hours from Lynchburg, Virginia to Eldoret, Kenya, losing seven hours to Eastern Standard Time in the United States and getting very little to no sleep in the process. We are therefore now seven hours ahead of EST in the United States.](#)

When we arrived in Eldoret, we immediately drove over to Cicada Hotel near the city centre of town, a city with a population of 300,000 people. We unloaded my bags and boxes and I checked into Room 309 on the third floor of a six-floor hotel. It seemed to be a very clean and good hotel. I was also able to go to one of the row of desktop computers in the lobby of the hotel and go to my email account. [It was there that I found out that Paul Swets missed his flight connection for London, England in Dallas, Texas completely due to his flight leaving late from Memphis, Tennessee. Therefore, his flight to London was late in arriving and he missed the connecting flight from London to Nairobi, Kenya with me. Fortunately, Jennifer, my wife, saw his predicament and emailed him while he was in London, and told him not to worry, but keep trying to get to Nairobi and we would eventually find out where he was. We also learned from one of his emails from London that he was going to be on the Virgin Atlantic Flight VS 671, which left London last night and would arrive in Nairobi at 7:50 AM today. Since I did not have email connection to him, this was the first time that I](#)

could get in touch with him, so I emailed him two messages telling him the same thing that Jennifer did and told him that we would try to make sure that someone would be there to meet him in Nairobi at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport this morning when he arrived there. So I also emailed Zachary Wanjohi, our TPI National Director in Nairobi, Kenya, to see if he could meet Paul Swets this morning at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, but we could not get in touch with him by phone at the Hotel 680, where his church used to meet in the city centre there in Nairobi. Pastor Martin Shikuku also tried to reach some of his contacts in Nairobi, but he too failed to reach anyone this morning. We finally left it to see if Martin could keep trying to find someone who could go and meet him at the airport.

Meanwhile, [the African team left me there for about two hours so I could get some breakfast, take a shower, and get ready for a church service later this morning. There is no rest for the weary in this missions work!](#) Pastor Martin Shikuku had planned for me to preach this morning at his church, Glory Baptist Church, on the west end of town. So I immediately took a lukewarm shower with a nozzle overhead and enjoyed a long and refreshing shower in a room with a queen-sized bed, a desk, and a bathroom with a shower curtain covering a portion of the bathroom area so that the water goes onto the floor all around. Then I spent some time looking over my sermon for the morning on Romans 8:1-6 on Motivation for Living the Christian Life, and then went downstairs and had a breakfast buffet by myself at a table in the restaurant. The place was packed with some sort of meeting that had taken place this week on Peace and Security in the Community. I ate a very leisurely breakfast which consisted of wheat bars of cereal mixed with corn flakes, a Spanish omelet, ham, sausage, tomato, wheat toast and jelly, several glasses of Mango Juice, and African Chi (tea). Then I went back upstairs to my room and laid down on my bed and fell fast asleep for a short period of time. I was awoken by Pastor Martin Shikuku, who had come to pick me up at a little after 9 AM to take me to his church for a morning worship service that starts around 11 AM. I was informed by Pastor Martin that his Associate Pastor, Charles Karuru, had made a connection with a travel agent here in town who was a friend of his named Alice. She arranged for a taxi to pick up Paul Swets at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport at 7:50 AM this morning when he arrived on the Virgin Atlantic Flight VS 671. The taxi driver would then drive him over to the North Rift Shuttle travel service at a gas station in Nairobi called Oil Lybia, the same travel service that we had used earlier last night to drive here to Eldoret through the night. I was very excited to hear this good news to know that Paul Swets would hopefully be with us soon in Eldoret, Kenya, albeit a tired traveler from all his excursions, and we prayed for these connections to work and to get Paul safely here to Eldoret, Kenya.

Then Pastor Martin Shikuku and I got into his four-door sedan Toyota Sprinter (the car that Dr. Gordon Henry helped to purchase for Martin), and drove over to his house on the way to church because Jennifer and I forgot to pack ties, so Martin was going to let me borrow one of his ties for the service because as we all know you cannot preach the Word without a tie, especially in Africa! Ha. Then after a short stop, we got back in Martin's car and drove over to Glory Baptist Church, which is in a Western suburb of Eldoret, called Mailenne, about four miles from the city centre. When I got there, the church was broken up into many different Bible Study groups, and so I went to all the different groups and took pictures and greeted the children and adults in the church. Pastor Martin Shikuku took me around to let me see his church in action. Then I went to the host table behind the podium in the main sanctuary and waited as the church service started. This was the first service with the new metal aluminum roof semi-completed with a few more cracks and leaks that have to be patched in the near future. As the church service started, there were two singing groups that led the church in worship, one a children's group and one a youth group. Then the worship leader, Beatrice Karuru, and a group of singers led the church in worship for awhile. Charles Karuru also led the church in reading the Scripture passage, Rom. 12:1-6 and making several announcements. Then we had a few more songs, greeting the church by everyone, and a

few more presentations. Right before I got up to preach my message, Charles Karuru received a call from the taxi driver in Nairobi, Kenya that he had met up with Paul Swets in the airport and that he had him in his care. Charles gave me the phone and Paul was on the line telling me that he finally arrived safely here in Nairobi. I could barely hear him because the worship music in the sanctuary was loud, but I told him that he was in good hands and that soon we would forward to seeing him here in Eldoret. Praise God that He is able to make all things work out for good to make sure that Paul Swets would arrive safely here with our team, and that God's timing is so perfect to get someone there to the airport to meet him when he got off the plane. I was very encouraged with this news as I went into the pulpit to preach the Word of God to the people.

Pastor Martin Shikuku invited me to come up and preach my message for the day on "Motivation for Living the Sanctified Christian Life," from Romans 8:1-6. I preached on three principles of sanctification based on our salvation in Christ. The first is that there is a new standing for the believer. It is a place of forgiveness and reconciliation based on Rom. 8:1. This verse goes back to the last verses in Rom. 7 and also back to Rom. 5:1, whereby justification by faith brought about peace with God and a new standing in grace. It is a place of deliverance and victory based on Rom. 8:2 where God delivered believers from the penalty and power of sin by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the new law in our members. It is a place of security and hope based on several questions and answers at the end of Rom. 8 (Rom. 8:31,33, 34, 35). The believer's standing is based on God's work of foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, and glorification (Rom. 8:29-30). The second principle of sanctification is that there is a new potential for the believer. This is based on two aspects of God's work of salvation seen in Rom. 8:3-4. First, a new transaction has been made on our behalf since the depravity of mankind put mankind in a desperate condition. God sent His Son to be a sin offering to condemn sin and offer salvation in Christ's name. Second, a new capacity has been released in us whereby the righteous requirements of the Law are fulfilled in us by the fact that we have been given a new nature in Christ. The third principle of sanctification is that there is a new life in the Spirit for the believer. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer involves: spiritual deliverance from sin and death, spiritual life and peace, regeneration and new birth into the Body of Christ, spiritual strength for the body, mortification of our sins, adoption as sons of God, glorification of our bodies, and spiritual help in our prayer life. Therefore, as we implement these three principles and appropriate the truths in our life, we will see God deliver us from our sins and become more like Christ in our lives.

After completing the message, I gave an invitation for any unbelievers who needed to receive Christ as their Savior, and three women responded to the invitation and were saved: (1) Caren Sinzore, a singer in the youth group who is 16 years old, (2) Julia Chemutai, a 50 year old woman who came forward first, and (3) Christine Nakhumicha, a young 23 year old woman. Then I gave an invitation to any believers to come forward to surrender to what God wanted to do in their lives to appropriate any of these three principles in their lives. There were around 40 believers who came forward to surrender their lives to Christ and trust God for the Holy Spirit to do the sanctifying work of God in their lives. There was a good time of prayer and consecration, and then Pastor Martin Shikuku came up to close out the service and praise God for what He had done in today's service at Glory Baptist Church.

After the church service was over, we had a torrential downpour with a pretty strong wind, in which the people stayed under the newly placed tin roof which was tested to the max. There was a lot of water that poured through the cracks and holes in the roof, so some of us got a little wet and our

bags had to be put under a table to keep them dry. One of the church leaders took me into an adjoining office, Anne Shikuku's office, to host us with a drink and some bread, but I told them that Pastor Martin Shikuku had already asked me to be a part of the Monthly Leadership Training session after church, which met in the sanctuary. This is a meeting of all the key leaders of the church to receive further leadership training. Pastor Martin addressed a few issues and then introduced me to speak concerning leadership training of the leaders. I shared some of the basic principles of leadership, including an adaptation of a definition of leadership from Bruce Cook, in which leadership is a person who influences people to accomplish God's purposes in the church and the world. I also introduced the three dimensions of leadership, which are the person, the people, and the purpose. Leadership rises and falls in these three dimensions, and so we must develop as a leader in all three areas. I also shared the need to develop layers of leadership in the church so as to ensure that all the believers in the church are equipped for their ministries, by utilizing their spiritual gifts in the Body of Christ. Finally, I took a few questions and sought to answer them by helping the leaders to see their need to identify key leadership tasks in the church such as reaching a certain unreached area in the surrounding region with the gospel of Christ. Then develop the gifts in the Body of Christ to seek to meet that leadership task. Then we closed the session in a word of prayer and closed out the meeting.

Afterwards, I talked with some of the church people and also met some pastors from another church, who had come to meet me in connection with the TPI Institute next week. One of the pastors had emailed me before I came on this trip to come to Kenya, and who I had put in touch with Pastor Martin Shikuku. We had a short time of conversation with these men and then eventually, got in Pastor Martin's car and drove back through the dirt roads that now were very slippery and muddy due to the rain. Martin drove the car through many rain-soaked potholes that were filled with water without getting stuck once. We drove back through town to the Cicada Hotel to await the arrival of Paul Swets, who we had received word had now arrived in the city via the same van company, North Rift Shuttle travel service, that we drove here the night before. The driver, a man named Bernard, had driven Paul here this morning from Nairobi. Right after we arrived at the hotel, Charles Karuru took his car and picked up Paul Swets at the North Rift Shuttle company at their drop-off point in town. Charles then brought Paul over to the Cicada Hotel around 5:30 PM, and we all met him for the first time. [He had just arrived after a long arduous trip that involved several cancellations of flights, long delays, and finally arriving at the destination a very weary traveler. He did not have his suitcase nor the three boxes of notebooks for the Eldoret, Kenya TPI Institute, which begins tomorrow morning at Lumakanda, a small town about 40 miles west of Eldoret. Somehow, in his rugged travel itinerary, his luggage got separated from him somewhere, and we would now begin the long arduous process of trying to get the bags and boxes here as well.](#) Truly Paul had his baptism into Africa, which was his first ever trip to Africa, and one he will never forget.

The team went inside the Cicada Hotel and gathered around holding hands and gave thanks to the Lord for bringing Paul Swets here safely and bringing the whole team together for the first time. We can now function as a team just in time for tomorrow. We then got Paul Swets checked into his room on the fourth floor, Room 408, and he went to his room and got things sorted out for the first time in a couple of days. The hotel staff also moved me from Room 309 to Room 407, right next to Paul's room, so we could have rooms next to each other. Evidently, the room next to my original room, Room 309, was not working, and to keep us together, one of the aides in the Cicada Hotel, Matthew Limo, moved all my luggage, the boxes and bags into my new room, Room 407. Once I got situated into my new room, I met with Pastor Martin Shikuku and his wife, Anne Shikuku in my room, and we went over the TPI Eldoret budget and determined how much money was still need to

complete the budget. Then I counted out this amount of money and gave it to Martin so he could immediately go to some people and take care of the remaining needs of the budget in time for our institute tomorrow. Then I bid Pastor Martin and his wife goodbye for the day so they could leave to do their tasks, and we made plans to meet up tomorrow morning at 6:45 AM for the trip to Lumakanda, Kenya, a trip of about one hour due west from here.

Paul Swets and I went downstairs around 7:30 PM for our dinner meal since he was starving and I was pretty hungry myself. We ate in the restaurant called The Bazaar, right next to the hotel lobby. I had rice and a pepper steak, some vegetables, tomato soup and a bread roll, and a Coke Light (Diet Coke). We sat and ate and talked for a long while about his adventurous and arduous trip from Memphis, Tennessee to Eldoret, Kenya. [It all began when he arrived for his first leg of the trip in Memphis, Tennessee at the Memphis International Airport only to find that his flight from Memphis to Dallas, Texas was delayed due to a hurricane in the Dallas area. When he was informed that his flight would be delayed, Paul said, "It's in His hands" because he knew that God was sending him on this mission and many people from his home church in Memphis were supporting him and praying for him.](#) He tried to call me several times, however, and emailed me as well, but Jennifer and I had already left for Washington Dulles International Airport when he called us at home. He had also called Sheila Johnson, our travel agent, but she could reach us as well. Paul was supposed to take off at 3 PM from Memphis, but the flight from Dallas was delayed, so their return flight from Memphis back to Dallas did not leave until 4:30 PM, which meant that his flight arrived in Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport 10 minutes after his British Air flight to London, England had already left the airport. Paul immediately went to the British Air ticket counter and after much time spent in looking at many different options, the American Airlines ticket agent was finally able to get Paul on the last flight out of Dallas/Fort Worth, leaving at 8 PM Friday night to London, England. British Air was not able to get him on an earlier flight leaving out of Dallas/Fort Worth at 7:45 PM. He flew through the night and did not arrive in London Heathrow International Airport until 12:30 PM, about two hours later than my British Air flight had left for Nairobi, Kenya at 10:20 PM.

[While Paul Swets was in flight from Dallas/Fort Worth to London on his American Airlines flight, he had told a flight attendant of his predicament, and a woman across the aisle from him overheard him talking to her about his mission trip and the travails he was experiencing, and offered Paul to go to the Admirals Club in London Heathrow International Airport as her guest. When he arrived in London, he went with her to the Admirals Club and camped out there for most of the seven-and-a-half-hour layover in the London airport. When he got there, the British Air staff tried to get him unsuccessfully on a Kenya Airways flight since it was full, but did get him on a Virgin Atlantic Flight to Nairobi, Kenya, leaving around 8:00 PM later in the evening and getting into Nairobi at 7:50 AM the next day. He then spent the rest of the time during his layover in London Heathrow International Airport at the Admirals Club eating well at the plenteous buffets of food there at the Club and also got on the internet and emailed me again, but was finally able to pick up my wife Jennifer's email that told him not to worry about anything, and that John would be able to sort out your flight schedule when he got there, and would try to have everything worked out for you once you arrived. This email brought great encouragement to Paul because for the first time, he finally made contact with someone from TPI to assure him that we knew of his predicament and would do everything to retrieve him when he arrived in Nairobi, Kenya. It was great that Jennifer picked up Paul's many emails and responded to it when she did because I could not reach him until I reached Eldoret, Kenya, long after he left on his Virgin Atlantic flight would leave for Nairobi.](#)

Later on that evening, when Paul Swets went to confirm his Virgin Atlantic flight to Nairobi, Kenya, he was informed that the plane was full and that he had to fly standby. Once again, he had a few anxious moments, but fortunately, his name was called in time, and made the flight, and he squeezed into a seat between two big guys for a rather uncomfortable flight for the next eight hours. When Paul finally arrived at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya at 7:50 AM, his luggage, which consisted of one suitcase and three boxes of Eldoret, Kenya TPI notebooks, were not there at the Baggage Claim area due to all the changes of flight plans. So he spent a long time at the Virgin Atlantic Baggage Claim office filling out forms for his four missing bags, and getting assurance from them that they would get these bags to him in Eldoret, Kenya. As a result of the luggage problem and having to go through Passport Control, wait for his bags which never came, and fill out the paperwork on finding his missing bags, he was one of the last passengers to leave the Arrivals Terminal, but when he came out of the customs area and exited the airport, he saw a young man with a placard with his name, "Paul Swets" on it, and then he knew that I had made contact with him and had everything under control. Actually, God has everything in control, and takes care of His servants each step of the way! As Paul said earlier when informed of this predicament in Memphis, Tennessee at the beginning of His journey, "It's in His hands," and it truly was in His hands the whole trip long even though Paul and I could not communicate with each other along the way.

Then the taxi driver took Paul Swets to the North Rift Shuttle travel service around 12 PM at a gas station called Oil Lybia, and a driver named Bernard drove him in a van for five hours from the center of the city centre in Nairobi to the Eldoret, Kenya drop-off point, where Charles Karuru brought him over to the Cicada Hotel around 5:30 PM to finally meet up with our team after many long hours of traveling apart from each other. So we thanked God for His faithfulness, and it was great to hear Paul's side of the story and see how God kept him in peace in spite of the many disruptive hours that covered a span of about two days of travel time, delays, flight changes, and overall exhaustion. Welcome to Africa Paul!

After a good time of fellowship and acquaintance at the dinner meal, we both went upstairs to our room after first checking our emails at the internet in the lobby. Then I spent some time watching the World Cup on television while at the same time typing my email report at the desk in my room. I stayed up for a little while until about 10:30 PM because I was very tired from the trip myself. I was pretty ready to sleep but only slept for three hours and was wide awake again. I thank the Lord for His faithfulness to get us all safely to Eldoret, Kenya for our first of six week-long institutes in Central/East/Southern Africa. Please continue to pray for all our logistics and the financing of these institutes because we are trusting the Lord to cover the expenses for all of these pastors in six institutes in six countries.

Yours for Christ's mission,

John Balmer, Jr.