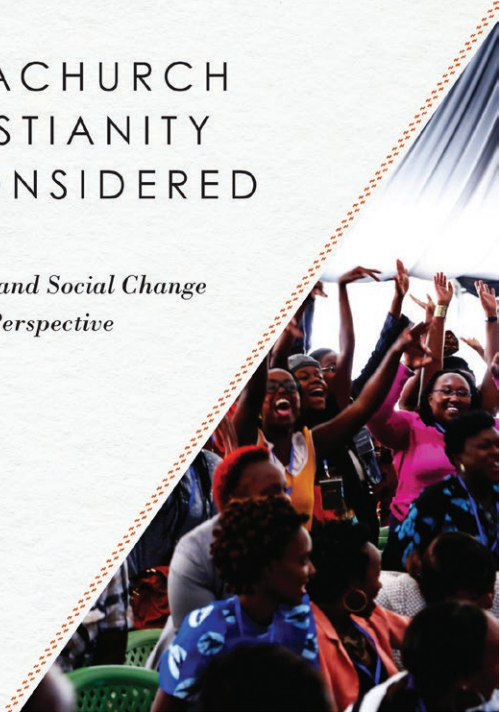


MISSIOLOGICAL  
ENGAGEMENTS

WANJIRU M. GITAU  
*Foreword by Mark R. Shaw*

# MEGACHURCH CHRISTIANITY RECONSIDERED

*Millennials and Social Change  
in African Perspective*



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## Oscar Muriu

### Bold Leadership in a Liminal Decade

#### **NAIROBI CHAPEL: RISING OUT OF A DISORIENTED DECADE**

Nairobi Chapel was started in 1952 as a small fellowship for colonial settler families. Since Kenya was a British colony, settlers generally paid homage to the Anglican All Saints Cathedral that met at what was then the edge of Nairobi. But a few families who could not quite fit in with the Anglicans began meeting instead at the Girl Guides headquarters. Their worship services and leadership structure reflected the traditions of the Plymouth Brethren. Congregations in this tradition did not recruit pastors, because they would come from among the elite and congregants deemed themselves sufficiently educated to interpret the Bible without appointed clergy. This group registered as the Nairobi Undenominational Church and built a little chapel near a newly established college that would grow into Kenya's premier research institution, the University of Nairobi. Gaining visibility through a radio program named *The Bible Hour*, they quickly experienced what was then significant growth among settlers and soldiers. However, when Kenya gained independence from the British in 1963, growth was reversed as most of the British returned to Britain. In subsequent years, although the University of Nairobi expanded around the Nairobi Chapel premises, students thought of it as a boring church for old white people and were not interested.

By the late 1980s, membership had dropped to sixteen people, only two of whom were Africans and the rest of diverse European origins. Barely

able to keep the lights on, Nairobi Chapel faced closure. The story goes that these remaining members spent six months praying and fasting about the future of the half-acre property on which it stood. They sensed that God was asking them to “indigenize” the church. In 1989 they requested the Reverend Mutava Musyimi, who was then pastor of Nairobi Baptist Church (and would later head the National Council of Churches of Kenya, join politics as a member of Parliament, and subsequently vie for the presidency), to help. Musyimi visited as a pastor for a while and took some time to understand this little congregation. He then explained that to indigenize, the leadership would have to adjust their Plymouth Brethren community to bring on a lead pastor, open up participation in Holy Communion, and create room for young people. Attracting young people would mean rethinking their methods of worship, outreach, and organizing for regular fellowship. Not fully grasping what this meant, the members agreed.

Oscar Muriu, a young man who had a passionate sense of call into pastoral ministry, was at the time just finishing his master of divinity degree at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology. Musyimi had known Muriu for several years, observed his deep commitment to the Lord, and admired his unshakable conviction that he was called to be a pastor. He presented the dilemma of the Nairobi Chapel to Muriu. The only downside, he informed him, was that the little church did not have funds to pay a salary that would be adequate to sustain his young family. Muriu accepted a stipend that was partly subsidized from Nairobi Baptist’s funds for a time. Toward the end of 1989, Muriu, his wife, Beatrice Wambui, and a team of other young people from Nairobi Baptist were commissioned to lead Nairobi Chapel.

In a year Muriu was confirmed as the pastor of the little church. With a new focus on evangelism to university students and revamped worship, Nairobi Chapel soon found itself flooded with students who eventually came back as young families. By 1993 the tiny sanctuary that had been built to accommodate under a hundred people was packed with more than two hundred, mostly students. They knocked down side walls to expand the wings, tucked in more benches, and creatively maxed out the space to hold four hundred people. Soon they had to run two services, then three, then four. The numerical growth continued year by year. By the late 1990s,

Nairobi Chapel had to hold seven weekend services to accommodate up to three thousand adults, most of whom were former students now with young families. A separate Thursday night worship service for university students, called SALT (Serving a Living Transformer), was also started. In 2000 Nairobi Chapel embarked on a major capital campaign to move to a large piece of land. However, in another few years the church changed course when it decided to divide up and spread out around the city in five separate congregations. The Mavuno Church was planted out of this decision as a congregation of four hundred members.

What was it about Muriu's leadership that turned this declining church into a successful megachurch and precipitated the success of Mavuno and the other church plants in the next decade?

Muriu was born in 1965 to a father who was a businessman. He attended Lenana High School, a boys' boarding school founded in the missionary era with a reputation as a leading institution for brilliant young men. After high school his father sent him to India to obtain a bachelor's degree in zoology. He came to Christ while he was in India and responded to the call to serve God when he was at a retreat in the mountains of northern India, where he witnessed a Hindu devotee's futile quest to find God by staring into the blazing hot sun. When he returned to Kenya, Muriu was planning to pursue a higher degree in science so that he could serve God as a leading scientist, but Mutava Musyimi challenged him instead to pursue a master of divinity degree to prepare to be a pastor. In 1986 Muriu joined the recently established Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST). This school had been started in 1983 by Association for Theological Education in Africa (ACTEA) as a part of a vision to train evangelical leaders for the growing church in Africa. It was at the end of Muriu's studies at NEGST that Musyimi once again approached him with the proposition that he should pastor Nairobi Chapel.

Muriu was not raised in a church, so even with his theological education, he had to learn pastoral leadership on the job. But this placed him at an advantage, since he didn't have to spend time unlearning old habits and models in order to lead innovatively. Since Nairobi Chapel was also in transition from the old missionary-shaped reality to a new era, there was

no preprogrammed script for him to follow as a leader. So he created a path by walking in it.

Initially Musyimi supervised the younger man, but quickly realized that he was wholly capable of thriving on his own. Musyimi stepped back, initially to the loud protestations of the unassuming Muriu. But then Muriu owned his leadership role and gave it his all. When asked how Nairobi Chapel grew phenomenally under his leadership, Muriu would simply comment that the elders who commissioned him figured out, “With a church of under twenty people, we couldn’t do much damage. But we didn’t know what we were doing. . . . We were learning on the go.”<sup>1</sup>

A leadership position is usually understood in one of three ways. Autocratic leadership is based on a traditionally assigned role, usually within an inheritance structure such as a monarchy. Bureaucratic leadership is holding an office under legal or contractual arrangements with stakeholders who have defined responsibilities as well as privileges. Democratically elected leaders, CEOs, and other office-based positions are seen this way. Charismatic leadership is usually contingent to a situation that comes up rather unexpectedly, requiring a gifted personality to rise to the occasion and guide the people. The success of charismatic leadership is based on the intersection of personal gifting and a *kairos* moment. While there are no hard lines between these three leadership models, there are definite expectations associated with each of them.

But this was not the case with the assignment that Muriu came into as a young man; he was simply a pastor. In fact, pastoral work wasn’t even referred to as leadership at that time. Muriu was in uncharted territory, particularly because of the marginal place that Nairobi Chapel occupied. Anthropologists use the term *liminal* to describe that place where individuals and society “don’t really know what they are doing.”<sup>2</sup> Liminality is the threshold between two worlds, one an old, often-decaying order, and a future that is vaguely imagined, yet to take shape. But it is precisely that threshold where there is potential for new possibilities.

<sup>1</sup>For this and other folkloric narratives that help to shape this chapter, see “Nairobi Chapel 25th Anniversary,” December 18, 2014, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzM25oV8ldM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzM25oV8ldM).

<sup>2</sup>Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), 359-73.

The decaying world in which Muriu became the pastor of a nondescript little chapel sandwiched between university residential halls was the 1990s, a disorienting decade for the whole Kenyan population. Under the presidency of Daniel arap Moi, Kenya was experiencing profound confusion. In 1978 Moi had taken over after the death of the first president, Jomo Kenyatta. In the first five years of his rule, Moi fared well under his *fuata nyayo* philosophy—that is, following in the footsteps of the founding president as a unifying leader. Beginning in the 1980s, Kenya, like many African countries, was hit by a series of misfortunes: a failed military coup in 1982, drought and famine, the emerging crisis of HIV/AIDS, and the implosion of the war-torn neighboring countries of Somalia, Uganda, Congo, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Throughout this time Kenya was under immense pressure. Internally, the country fell into disrepair with collapsing infrastructure, endemic poverty, rampant crime, and escalating political dissent. By the late 1980s President Moi's leadership was being challenged by increasing opposition demanding open democratic space through multiparty politics and better distribution of national resources. In reaction, Moi and those closest to him tightened their grip on power in unconventional ways that made Kenyans cower in deference. This was a time of severe political repression, with the disappearance or torture of supposed dissidents. In turn, ethnic communities and the rural poor turned against each other in anarchic conflict.

One of the devastating sects that arose around this time was a quasi-religious group known as the Mungiki. This ethnically fundamentalist group came into the limelight in the early 1990s, following ethnic clashes that targeted Kikuyu people in the Rift Valley Province. Rallying disaffected Kikuyu youth, Mungiki compelled adherents to abandon Western lifestyles and Christianity to worship the traditional Kikuyu god Ngai and to practice ritual customs such as female circumcision and prayer and sacrifices facing Mount Kenya. All this was to awaken the apparently oppressed Kikuyu people. Organizing with army-like discipline, the movement gained a massive following of about two million youth at the height of its visibility. To fund its activities, the Mungiki established a parallel government in crime-ridden, low-income settlements of Nairobi. The movement also took control of the chaotic Matatu transport and construction industries, levying

protection tax and dishing out informal justice to offenders in these areas. Basic law enforcement and justice systems were so broken and corrupt that low-income and rural residents welcomed Mungiki protection for a fee. With time, however, these actions spiraled into extortionate vengeance.

While Mungiki had the greatest visibility, there were other similarly organized and politically funded fundamentalist militia groups that galvanized their communities by reasserting traditional lore and identity over against other perceived “enemy” tribes and invasive modernity. Such groups included warriors from the Kalenjin communities, the Sabaot land defense force from the Elgon district, Chinkoro of the Kisii community, the Mombasa Republican Movement from the coastal Kwale district, the Taliban Luo group in Nairobi’s informal settlements, and Jeshi la Mzee, among others.<sup>3</sup> Such groups caused considerable civil unrest throughout the 1990s.

### FORMING AND LEADING A CREATIVE COMMUNITAS

This was the larger world in which Muriu pastored and grew Nairobi Chapel from twenty people to three thousand: one shadowed by poverty, political repression and retaliation, and fundamentalist ethnic mobilizing around traditional lore. Opposition politicians, civil societies, and NGOs all tried to make sense of the chaos through political activism and humanitarian-driven work. A new brand of Pentecostal churches also thrived in this decade (which will be explored further in chapter two). Yet much of this action—whether political, ecclesial, economic, or cultural—only increased the number of dissonant voices without a coherent vision to guide the country to renewal.

Anthropologists point out that the reconstructive possibilities of a liminal period of time lie in both the decaying order and the potential in a forgotten or alienated part of society. Although Muriu jokes that he couldn’t do much damage with the few white folks who remained at Nairobi Chapel, they were not the objective of his ministry efforts. The university students were his interest. For all practical purposes the university fraternity

<sup>3</sup>P. Kagwanja, “Courting Genocide: Populism, Ethno-nationalism and the Informalisation of Violence in Kenya’s 2008 Post-election Crisis,” in *Kenya’s Uncertain Democracy: The Electoral Crisis of 2008*, ed. Peter Kagwanja and Roger Southall (New York: Routledge, 2013). See also Mahathir, “‘Rag-Tug’ Militia Groups That Control Kenya,” *Muthumbi* (blog), April 23, 2008, <http://muthumbi.blogspot.com/2008/04/rag-tug-militia-groups-that-control.html>.



was forgotten by the political class. There was plenty of restiveness within public universities, including frequent strikes in protest of botched political processes. But to shush them, President Moi would tell young people to await their turn tomorrow. Likewise, Christians in the university had become disconnected from existing churches. Student movements such as FOCUS (Fellowship of Christian Unions), Navigators, and Campus Crusade (New Life) were quite active in the universities. But these Christian groups were not addressing the volatile concerns of the time and so remained relatively small, as they were deemed out of touch with reality by the majority of students.

Muriu inherited a church that had a successful beginning with the Plymouth Brethren. In its prime back in the 1960s, it had run a radio ministry and attracted quite a following among the British. This history gave Muriu and Nairobi Chapel some legitimacy that was not available to the new, unaffiliated Pentecostal startups that were all over the place. Muriu was not tied down by a board of elders, nor were there administrators to consult on day-to-day decisions. Autonomy from political, economic, and ecclesial control brought opportunities for new and experimental possibilities in evangelism, community formation, and particularly leadership and leadership development.

As a graduate of NEGST, Muriu was aware of how African churches and theologians had wrestled with the problem of foreignness in the structures and methods of the older missionary generation. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, the challenge was to shift power, resources, and structures from the missionary generation to African leaders. By the 1990s, there was not so much a foreignness problem as a generational one. The younger educated generation had increasingly lost touch with the church, and significant portions of the church had become out of touch with what was happening in wider society. Muriu did not come as a prophet to that larger social sphere, but he reawakened the university-educated generation to start to develop a social consciousness that would extrapolate the implications of the gospel for a wider world.

But passing on the agency of the gospel did not necessarily start out as conscious effort. Muriu's passion was simply to evangelize. Recognizing the possibilities that were latent among the intellectually astute students,

Muriu directed evangelism and community organizing activities toward them. He and his team of seven young people from Nairobi Baptist took to the pastoral task of reaching out with the energy of youthfulness. They went door-to-door in the residential halls, witnessing and inviting students to church. For Sunday worship, the trusty old organ was replaced with drums and electric guitars. Hymnals were replaced with the newer technology of an overhead projector. They projected a mix of hymns and contemporary Christian music (at the time the Hosanna! Integrity and Maranatha labels were the trend). A band of young students led music, which stood in contrast both to the more precision-driven music of the missionary hymns and the loud choruses of the Pentecostals. The band not only experimented with musical instruments, but also learned to mix the trendy contemporary worship music with the rhythms of African beats, eventually adding African dress.

Between Sundays Muriu worked tirelessly as he prayed, read, and visited with students. He was convinced that God had a great future for Nairobi Chapel. Praying through Isaiah 54, he asked God to give him thirty students to join him in reaching the university. He followed his prayers with plans to engage first-year students because they would be easier to influence and retain than older students. A buzz spread through the university community, and soon the church was flooded with curious and spiritually hungry students who resonated with Muriu's style of thinking intellectually about the faith. His closeness to them in age was also a huge plus.

A few influences shaped Muriu's intellectual approach. First, trained as a biologist in India, he was adept at using statistical and empirical evidence to prove his point. He would make broad appeal to the scientific and natural world, including his love for gardening. Another influence was his key mentor, the British Anglican pastor John Stott, who occasionally visited and stayed at Muriu's home. A third was his persuasive communication skills, not in the charismatic style of the Pentecostals, but rather honed through disciplined reading of a wide range of literature.

By the mid-1990s, Nairobi Chapel had many former students returning as young families. The Sunday worship service was piped into a room for nursing mothers, which was then a new approach in churches. They put up prefab classroom facilities at the back of the chapel to accommodate

the young ones. Muriu's wife, Beatrice Wambui, an art teacher by profession, organized the children's classes according to grades and recruited all her friends as volunteers in children's church. The children's ministry, from the nursery through the teen "Rites of Passage" (ROPES) program, came to greatly appeal to young parents.

Just as with pastoring, Muriu did not have a script for leadership, nor a team of equals to work with. Missionary Omar Djoeandy came on as copastor in the mid-'90s. Djoeandy was a Chinese-Australian trained as a medical missionary in the United States. In answer to God's call, he and his American wife, Kay, came to get a seminary degree at NEGST around the same time that Muriu was also a student. Later they returned and became care pastors at Nairobi Chapel.

The rest of the leadership roles were shaped by the needs that emerged in the growing community in this liminal time. Anthropologists point out that the rise of a new *communitas* is not just about "community" but about the conception of an egalitarian modality of relationships where individuals set aside social roles and status in transitional times. In place of the old structures that assert power, participants in the new community attach to one another as friends who share the same recognizable humanity and relate spontaneously as roles emerge. So at Nairobi Chapel in the 1990s, Muriu was simply "Oscar" to his congregation. He never adopted the title "Reverend" or "Bishop." The rigid boundaries between clergy and congregants, then prevalent in older churches, gave way to collegial relationships as copastors, volunteers, and friends around the roles that were evolving. As Nairobi Chapel became financially successful, Muriu eschewed status symbols such as new cars, fancy dress, and pandering to popular personalities that showed up in his congregation. Only late in the decade did the title "Pastor" become a regular prefix, with the rise of another generation that struggled to differentiate the personal side of pastoral ministry from leadership responsibility and authority.

Muriu devised opportunities and created leadership spaces where his trainees, and eventually colleagues, could find their place to serve. In answer to his prayer that God would give him workers for the harvest field, Muriu began to identify and recruit specific students to mentor. In 1993 he started what came to be known as the Internship Program. Given our familiarity

with internships today, it would be easy to undervalue how radical Muriu's idea of developing leaders from within the context of practical ministry was. At the time it was unheard of for a university graduate to spend a year serving in a church, because attaining a university education was such a unique privilege. Also, there was no compensation in an internship. Trainees had to raise support from friends and families, and there was no esteem in clergy work.

For Muriu there was nothing inferior about internship. He created this program as a chance to discover one's calling, to explore and exercise gifts, and to develop new skills alongside others. Interns were given real responsibility and learned how to lead by running the church's ministries under his coaching. They were trained in personal disciplines of prayer, study, and self-care. They would raise resources and spend weeks on short-term mission trips in remote parts of the country or sometimes abroad in other African countries. In subsequent years, interns went on to become pastoral trainees and eventually salaried ministry directors in departments that they created and shaped. They supervised large cohorts of volunteers for worship and creative arts, pastoral care, small groups, social justice, young adults and youth, children, and church planting, all of which grew every year.

Although it was not obvious at the time, this model of the internship inspired an educated demographic to revalue its formal education as a call to be responsible toward the church and wider society. The program raised a generation of leaders who have gone on to assume significant responsibilities in church and social-justice initiatives in which they are also coaching younger leaders. One of the first interns, Janet Mutinda, served as an associate pastor at Nairobi Chapel before moving to become the director of New Life Home. Steve Maina, another of the early interns, led one of the first church plants of Nairobi Chapel, Lifespring Chapel. He later relegated the leadership to another former intern-turned-pastor, Bob Kikuyu, while he went to lead the Anglican Mission organization Church Army in New Zealand. Jane Wathome interned in 1996, then pursued a theological degree at Nairobi International School of Theology. While doing a field practicum, she came face-to-face with the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS, especially on women, in Rongai on the southern outskirts of Nairobi. Jane tightened up her own family spending and asked her friends to do the same, so that

they could pool their meager resources to start home-based care for infected and affected women and their children. Her project became known as Beacon of Hope. With the support of Nairobi Chapel members and their networks, including Chapel Hill in North Carolina and Grace Community Church in Indiana, it grew from its early humble stage into a large community center with a hospital and a technical school serving the whole Rongai Township. In just over fifteen years, the center has considerably reversed the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in the town. Similar projects by former Nairobi Chapel interns include a network of health centers (known as Tumaini clinics) in low-income areas, children's homes, and child sponsorship projects. Numerous others are leading initiatives in the business and corporate worlds.

The internship program also attracted international participants from churches in America, Australia, and Europe, who were fascinated by Muriu's leadership. One couple, Jason and Heather Webb, were sent by Elmbrook Chapel in Wisconsin. After serving for three years at Nairobi Chapel, they returned to the United States and planted Brooklife Church in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. They led the church into significant growth for seven years before being called back to lead Elmbrook. Jason is now the senior pastor of this eight-thousand-member megachurch, which is now planting similar community churches.

### **SETBACK, RESET, AND A NEW ERA**

During the 1990s the number of people worshipping at Nairobi Chapel grew from the original twenty to more than three thousand, and would have grown more if there had been space. Each year the leadership team got more creative in their attempts to accommodate the numbers. At the peak of this innovation there were seven worship services each weekend. On Sunday, there was one at 8:00 a.m., two at 10:00 a.m., and two at 12:00 p.m., the extra two being held in Ufungamano Hall five hundred meters down the road. Two services were offered in the evening: one on Saturday and one on Sunday. Parking on the university curbside was a perpetual headache as the church struggled to create room for increasingly well-to-do congregants.

By 2000 the elders had made the decision to move the church to large premises along Ngong Road on the edge of several middle-class suburbs.

What then seemed like an impossible amount of money to raise, forty million Kenyan shillings (US\$400,000), was needed to purchase the land. The church held fundraisers such as women's bake sales and men's golf tournaments. Some involved everybody, such as the walk across the floor of the Rift Valley (famously dubbed the "escarpment crunching walk") and the Mount Kenya climb. The children walked 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Nairobi to Thika; the youth walked 140 kilometers (87 miles) from Thika to the gate of Mount Kenya; the women climbed the first half of mountain; and the men scaled the top of the mountain. Finally the land was purchased, and the big move was planned for 2003.

However, Nairobi Chapel's plans were disrupted by political transition. In December 2002, President Moi, who had ruled the country for twenty-four years, was replaced by the NARC government led by Mwai Kibaki. The winning campaign platform was a promise to fix a wide range of issues from the Moi era, one of which was massive irregularities in land allocation. Early in 2003, the new NARC government froze construction on land near forests. As it turned out, Nairobi Chapel's new land was located on the edge of the Ngong Road Forest. Their relocation was halted.

Stumped, the church leadership entered a new season of prayer and consultation that would last another two years. During this time it became apparent that God was leading them to give up relocating as a single congregation and instead divide up and spread out around the city. To outsiders, as well as some congregants, the move seemed ill-advised because there was so much personal attachment to the pioneering decade of the 1990s. But if hindsight is always 20/20, wisdom is proved right by her children. By the end of August 2005, only one congregation of roughly five hundred people still met at the former Nairobi Chapel site, now renamed Mamlaka Hill Chapel. Everyone else was in one of the four other new plants scattered across the city: Kileleshwa Covenant, Mashariki, Mamlaka, Mavuno, or Nairobi Chapel.

Muriu himself planted one of the congregations near the property originally bought by Nairobi Chapel. Under his leadership Nairobi Chapel continues to focus on raising up the next generation of church leaders. They develop their gifts through a vibrant planting movement, discipleship, and serving the poor through a variety of social-justice projects. Muriu is

an internationally well-respected voice in missions who has been invited to speak at many conferences, including Urbana. He is also a frequent speaker in some Western theological institutions.

Yet in retrospect, the real significance of Muriu's influence on Kenyan and African Christianity is that his leadership generated a new indigenous intellectual current that deliberately engages the social implications of the gospel in the local worlds.<sup>4</sup> This first happened at the margins of a university community, but now it is becoming its own kind of mainstream. Though aware of the global influences that are sweeping over local cultures, it seeks homegrown ideas, resources, and solutions that might be available to help new generations determine their destiny. At the same time, it seeks out and is sought for partnerships by churches from around the world. It also shapes church-planting and social ministries that have grown out of Nairobi Chapel and its daughter churches. Nairobi Chapel has had an indirect renewing impact on other churches, which do not always credit it but which demonstrate its influence through leadership development internships, homegrown social-justice initiatives, decentralized multiplication of middle-class churches, and critique of global religious personalities and their media empires.

That said, keen observers of Kenya's recent social, economic, and state bureaucracies note that by focusing his latter energies on outreach to an ever-younger demographic (which his trainees are also doing), Oscar Muriu has himself missed a *kairos* opportunity to help the now-awakened 1990s generation shift to a maturing discernment of the gospel's interaction with national realities. Muriu and leaders of similar middle-class churches that thrived with Kenya's watershed political events—the 2002 and 2008 elections and the 2010 constitutional process—had the social-class base

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<sup>4</sup>There were earlier cultural-intellectual currents, the most obvious of which was the strong rebuttal of colonialism through African literature. The African cultural theology of the 1960s and '70s was another budding indigenous intellectual wave, but its steam may have been exhausted by the socioeconomic crises of the 1980s and '90s. Within the African cultural theology was the famous debate on missionary moratorium. A related but much less recognized indigenous intellectual current came through the student movements of Scripture Union, Kenya Secondary Christian Fellowship (KSCF), and the college-based Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS), all of which have historical trajectories uniquely shaped by the local and global crosscurrents. The character of these rationalized responses to real-time crises of destabilized worlds has shaped small but important segments of the Christian populations through the decades, but their stories remain to be told in full.

to influence a conversation on the public ethics and moral grounding, now sorely lacking, of the elite that runs corporate and state machinery. In spite of efforts of younger churches like Mavuno to transform the social sphere, the vacuum in ethical leadership among the middle-aged elite is sending the country into a new cycle of dysfunction.

But the energy poured into expansion has borne fruit. Twelve years after relocation, the Association of Nairobi Chapel Churches has become a movement of fifteen thousand people in the church plants and their plants. Today each of these churches is not only an independent congregation loosely associated with the others, but each also has an array of social ministries started and supported by former interns, volunteers, and congregants. Altogether the story of the association is one of grassroots Christianity rising out of the ashes into a dynamic movement transforming the African urban world. Yet despite the success epitomized by the movement's numbers and dynamism, none of the church plants had an easy resettlement in the middle-class residential areas. To demonstrate, this story now turns to Muriithi Wanjau and his team of three other pastors and four hundred congregants who were commissioned to plant the Mombasa Road congregation that became Mavuno Church.



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