



“And God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:10).

Dear friends and family,

Happy New Year! I know many have eagerly anticipated 2021 and the hope that comes with new possibilities. I pray that you can step into the new year with a ***“peace... which surpasses all understanding,”*** even in the midst of trial (Philippians 4:7). I often have to be reminded that, as the *Westminster Confession* puts it, “God ordains whatsoever comes to pass” in my life. What’s more, everything God ordains is for my good and His glory. Who am I to declare what God has called good otherwise?

At the beginning of this new year, the Rafiki Village Ghana will be studying the book of Genesis. It feels fitting to start anew with these words: ***“In the beginning”*** (Genesis 1:1). As this will be my first official school term in my role as Academic Coordinator and language arts teacher, it truly does feel like the beginning! The president has announced that schools will open for all grade levels (for the first time since March) in mid-January, and we look forward to seeing all our students—day students and resident students—learning together again. This is a very *good* thing we can praise God for! As we look ahead to the coming school term, I would like to fill you in on what is going on around the Village.

I enjoyed getting to know the students and teachers during what we called an “Academic Maintenance Term.” Only two grade levels were in official school with both day students and resident students in attendance. The other classes were made up of children who live in the Village. Teachers also created learning packets for students outside the Village. This was a wonderful opportunity for me to observe

and jump in and do some teaching. I spent time with the eleventh grade English class as we read Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Because ancient Greece was home to the first Olympics, we had ourselves a literary Olympics! Students were awarded for the best original poem based on themes from *The Odyssey*, their responses to questions about Lord Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses,” and the most-improved essay. The students enjoyed the competition—and the prizes! *Will you pray the students are compelled to work diligently and give their best for God’s glory?*



11th-grade students with medals and prizes

A couple of the Rafiki children also turned sixteen this past term. It is safe to say that they are no longer little children! My favorite part of the birthday celebration is when the student requests for us to sing his or her favorite hymn. One voice can be heard singing the first line or so, giving the tune of the hymn, before everyone joins in to serenade the birthday boy or girl. *I pray that the beautiful words of the hymns that come so quickly to the children's lips will reside deep in their hearts.*



Emmanuel, a resident, on his sixteenth birthday



A resident's birthday celebration

The past few months have been a time of great learning for me, and there is only more to come!

Though learning is rarely easy, what God ordains for us is always good. We can rest in His good plans for us.

Will you join me in prayer for the following:

- *That we can implement the necessary COVID-19 regulations for students as they return to school.*
- *That we can effectively train teachers throughout the term and strive for excellence as a school.*
- *That I will teach my students to the best of my ability.*
- *That our headmaster, missionary Melissa Weideman, will recover from sickness and return to the field soon.*
- *That every child at the Village will know Christ as Lord and Savior.*

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P.S. How many Rafiki chickens does it take to cross the Village?