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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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Missionary #257

Dear friends,

Happy May Day! Here in Tanzania, May first is a holiday so I thought I would take this opportunity to give you a quick update.

Safe Return

As most of you know, we spent several weeks in the U.S.A. from mid-March through April. Last Friday evening we arrived in Tanzania and were greeted by our friend (*rafiki yetu*) and coworker, Emmanuel. It was so good to see his smiling face welcoming us back to our life here in Tanzania. Peggy Martin made sure we had bread, eggs, and milk, plus a bouquet of beautiful sweetheart roses to greet us. Saturday, we spent mostly unpacking and trying to catch up on things. Sunday, we had a wonderful time of worship, followed by lunch at an Indian restaurant with the Martins, the Hoopers, and our new friend Chuck.



Smiling after a wonderful dinner hosted by Peggy. Gwen, Mary, Peggy, and Kent in the front row. John, Jim, and Chuck in the back.

Short-Term Missionaries

During our time away, Dr. Kent and Peggy Martin were able to come to Tanzania to assist with running the Village. Kent and Peggy retired from seven years of service in Tanzania a couple of years ago, and still have strong ties here. Therefore, they were an ideal choice to cover the Village while we were away. They also invited their newly retired friend Chuck to come and see if this is a work God might be calling him to. This year marks the eleventh time that Jim and Mary Hooper have served at Rafiki Village Tanzania. They too have developed ties to our national workers and children. Everyone looks forward to the two or more months they spend with us each year.

Is God calling?

I doubt Jesus will be calling you on the phone, but he just might be using one of your friends to make the call for him. Chuck had recently retired when he received a call from Kent and Peggy. "How would you like to join us on a month-long missions trip to Tanzania?" they asked. He prayed about it. Although he was unsure of what he would do on this trip,

he trusted that God had a plan. Little did he know that his experience of setting up remote internet access as well as setting up networks would be a highly needed skill. Our Home Office wanted to make changes in the way the system had been set up, and needed someone to help do the work. Now Chuck wants to see if Rafiki might want him to do similar work in the other nine countries that host Rafiki Villages. If you are open to having God use you in whatever way, He will always put you where you are needed, even if it is not obvious to you. What we have learned here is that most Africans do not have access to all the education that Americans take for granted. Since that is true, short-term missionaries often fill gaps in the knowledge and skill base here. Come and see how God can use your experiences and knowledge to support the work here in Africa.

Jumping Into the Work

Monday morning saw John and I back at our desks: leading devotions, teaching lessons, approving expenses, and preparing for the monthly payroll. Gratefully, everyone extended grace to us, and understood if we were a bit sleepy, and our Swahili quite rusty! We were blessed with Peggy making a delicious dinner on Monday night. It was a wonderful time to fellowship and begin to wrap up their time here while we are getting re-acclimated. The Martins and Chuck should be well on their way back to America as I write this. We are so thankful for their work and pray for their safe return.

Relationships are the Real Work

Each day we have our jobs to do but the real work is in building and maintaining relationships. When we go into the world to share the gospel it is to make disciples. We can see from the missionary journeys of Paul that this is not just a one shot deal. Relationships are built with interactions and with love. We love working with our coworkers here in Tanzania as we also love sharing about this work with you back in America. Living abroad has made us more intentional with communication with our family back home, but it has also made us more intentional about keeping up communication with our coworkers, and national partners. Not mechanical networking, but instead a beautiful sharing and mutual building process. Every question someone asks is a way of making a connection. In America, we are often so focused on the product that we often miss sight of the relationships. In Africa, the focus is on relationships first. I believe that it is a good and godly lesson for us to learn.

Amy and Tekle

We are excited that seasoned Rafiki missionaries, Amy and Tekle, will continue their work for Rafiki with us in Tanzania. We look forward to their help and friendship in our work to develop godly contributors through Bible study and classical Christian education. We will be looking for the best ways that God can use our gifts to accomplish this goal. They are in the process of applying for their resident worker visas and hope that they might arrive in the next month or so.

Praises and Prayer Requests

- Thank you all for lifting us up in prayer. God is pleased to move the work forward as you pray. Your prayers encourage us when we are feeling tempted to despair.
- Thanks to God for our safe journeys up and down the East coast this past month. We put many miles on our rental car but we had no troubles whatsoever.

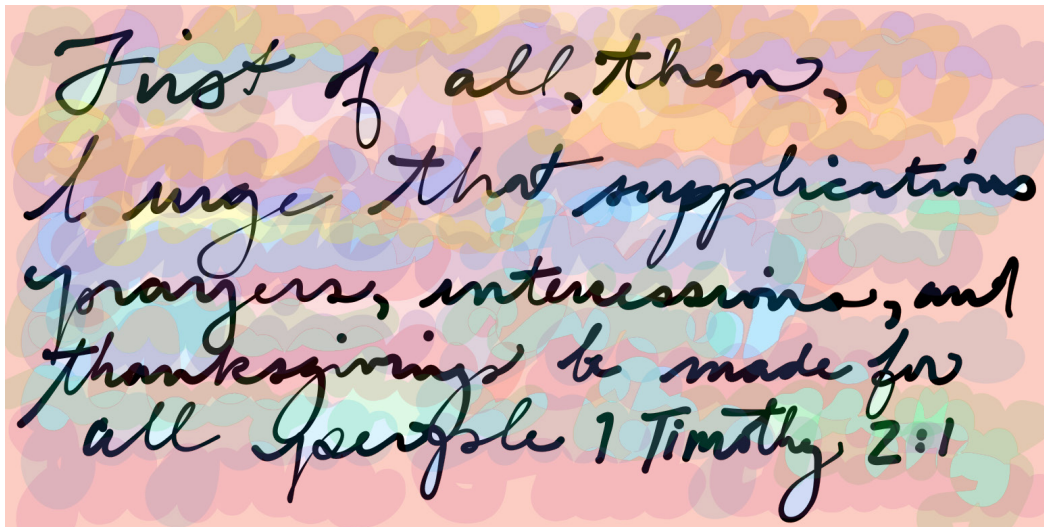


All dressed up for the first day back to work.



Peggy, Janet Shoo, and Kent. Old friends gather.

- Thanks to God that during our absence the Village continued to remain safe, and staff mothers were safely able to have their babies.
- Please pray God will allow the resident worker visas for Amy and Tekle to be processed quickly so that they can join us ASAP.
- Please pray God will give our form six students (away at boarding schools) determination, and calm and clear thinking as they take their upcoming national exams. These exams determine which schools they may apply to continue their education.
- Please pray God will give John and I wisdom as we prepare for several visiting short-term missionaries. This includes over twenty student musicians from Wheaton College in Illinois.



Gwen's digital paint prayer meditation for April 28.

It was a blessing to see many of you while we were in the States. If we did not get a chance to see you in person, know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. Thanks again for all your support in prayer and financially.

With love,

Gwen and John Cicone