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# RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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Missionary #252

*“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them:... if service, in our serving...” (Romans 12:4-7).*

Dear friends and mission partners,

Not all the stories of growth at Rafiki are about children and students.

In 2002, twenty-three years ago, Machere Patrick joined Rafiki as a Security Guard. At that time our Village was mostly bush: the front gate was built, there were two containers holding construction materials, a crew clearing land for buildings and fences, and not much else. Patrick has been with us ever since as our Senior Security Guard.

He comes from a village in western Uganda where he was raised by a widowed mother. When she could no longer afford school fees, she asked an American missionary serving in their area if he could help find a job for Patrick. The missionary organization needed guards and hired Patrick, eventually moving him to Kampala. Eight years later that missionary was returning to the U.S. and suggested Patrick to Rafiki.

A year later the first orphan arrived, and quickly the Village was raising over 100 young children. “The kids were so young, some couldn’t talk, others were just learning, others were a bit older. For sure they were happy,” he said. Soon after, the school started, but the students were not the only ones learning.



With the Rafiki Village in the background, Machere Patrick stands with three of his children: Jovan, Joyce, and Susan. They are current students at the Rafiki school.

“Rafiki taught me how to be a parent, a good parent,” Patrick said. Patrick and his wife had six children, but Patrick has been raising them

on his own for more than ten years. One of them is completing senior six (grade level thirteen) this month and three remain at Rafiki. “People want to know how I raised these kids. I tell them I learned it all from Rafiki.”

Working security for a fifty-acre compound is hard work. Patrick has patrolled nights and days, been our eyes and ears in the community, and dealt with countless crises large and small. He has enjoyed all of it and is grateful for years of steady work and good, regular pay that he probably could not have gotten anywhere else.

A month ago he came to see me. “My body is worn out,” he said. “I’m ready to retire at the end of the year and go back to the village to create a place for my family to come.” It feels like we are losing a part of our history, but with his retirement benefit he will be able to build a comfortable village farm home.

But he is not quite done with us yet, he is working with a group of 200 pastors to bring Bibles and the Rafiki Bible Study to his home area. “**Well done, good and faithful servant**” (Matthew 25:21). We will miss you.

## Missionary changes for 2026

Amber Okoth, our outstanding Headmaster, will be stepping down at the end of February to concentrate on being a full-time mother. Her steady leadership and mentoring has helped the school thrive amid many challenges. Her husband, Paul, will continue in missionary service here. I (David) will be taking over Headmaster duties in March.

At a recent pastors’ conference in Mpigi, David Graves and Paul Okoth presented materials and taught pastors how to use a study Bible and Rafiki Bible Studies in their churches and congregations. In partnership with Crossway, Ligonier, and the Rosemary Jensen Bible Foundation, we are distributing Global Study Bibles, Rafiki Bible Studies, and Bible commentaries to pastors and leaders throughout Uganda.

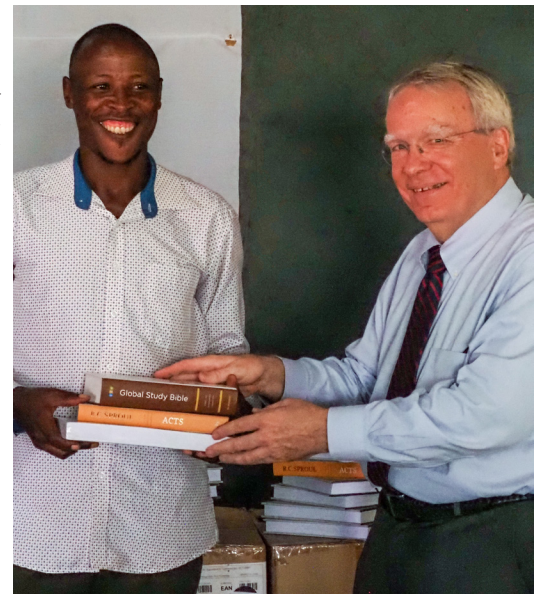
## Family Updates

Michelle had to rush back to the U.S. in early December when her mother died suddenly. We will return for a memorial service in late March. We plan to be in the U.S. in April and part of May and hope to have the chance to see many of you to update you on all that is happening here and to thank you in person for your support.

Michelle has completed her research for her doctorate and received all necessary approvals to write the dissertation. She is hard at work, hoping to finish by January 31. Nathan has one more semester at Virginia Tech. He received his number one choice of Army branch: Cyber Command and is stationed at Ft Meade. Miranda is in New York City costuming the Metropolitan Opera and working with middle schoolers in her church’s youth group. Emma will be moving back to the U.S. in early June as her four-year assignment in Cambridge is coming to an end. I (David) spent some time with her this fall as she graciously hosted me while I had cataract surgery on both eyes. The world is now much brighter and more colorful—and for the first time in six decades I am not wearing glasses.

## Please pray for

- Full financial support for us to continue serving in Uganda (<https://RafikiFoundation.org/missionary/michelle-and-david-graves-252>).
- Inspiration, strength, and perseverance for Michelle as she works towards her doctorate.
- Rafiki to grow to seventy missionaries on the field in 2026.
- All Rafiki teachers institutes—particularly ours here in Uganda—to be filled up and complete the accreditation process.
- Rafiki Foundation to attain full funding of 3,500 Rafiki students and orphans by end of this year.



David Graves presenting Bibles at the pastors’ conference in Mpigi.



On the last day of their second Short-term mission trip to Uganda, Virginians Laura Pearson, Libby Clement, Elizabeth Clement, Kaila Holmes, and Elizabeth Pearson join the residents outside the guest house. Why don’t you follow their example and join us next summer?



- *All of our children and students to come to know God early and become godly contributors.*
- *100 schools in Africa to be using the Rafiki Bible Study and Rafiki Education System*
- *The Rafiki Classical Academy in Eustis, Florida, to continue to grow and be a model for other schools and for training new missionaries.*
- *Wisdom as we steward all the resources God has given us and that the distribution of every Bible, Bible study, and the curriculum would bear much fruit.*
- *Continued safety and protection for the Uganda Village.*
- *Awakening in the church around the world.*

Thank you for your support materially and in prayer. We wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In Christ,



Michelle and David Graves



Directed by our dynamic music teacher Edward, primary students perform in the second annual Christmas Cantata. Students from all grade levels sing carols, perform Christmas skits and poems, and play orchestral pieces before fellow students, parents, and friends.



EC3 students celebrate the 100th day of school with traditional instruments plus cake, soda, and bubbles.