



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

December 2020 – Amy Ketcham and Tekle Kumera

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us)” (Matthew 1:22-23).

Dear friends and family,

What a wonderful and comforting reminder that we are not alone. God is with us. Jesus loves us, comforts us, forgives us, and gives us hope. For many of us, this past year has been full of seemingly relentless challenges. But as Tekle and I look back upon these challenges, we can also see that through them all God has not only been with us but has carried us through them and even used the trials for our good!

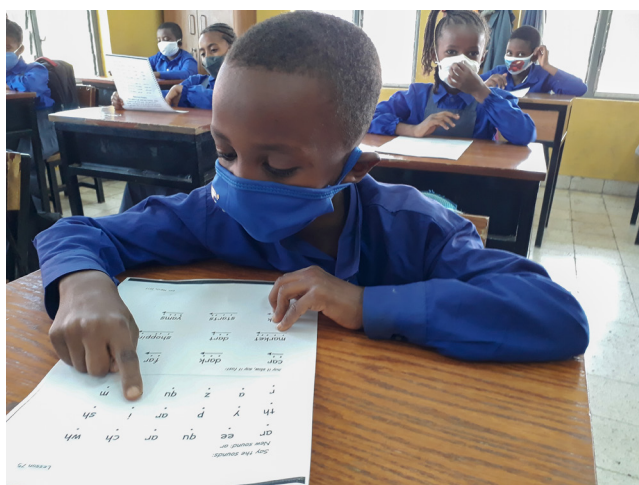
Even though our school was closed for six months, there was still learning and teaching going on, and teachers were able to come for extensive training in classical Christian education. Even though the local churches had to temporarily shut down, the mothers, children, and missionaries worshiped together at Rafiki. Even though there were world-wide travel restrictions, we welcomed a new missionary, Sarah McMahon, to our team, and she has been training the preschool teachers how to use the Rafiki art and music curriculum. Even though COVID cases, hospitalizations, and deaths were on the rise in much of the world, somehow it did not ravage Ethiopia as experts had predicted, and the mortality rate here is low. For all this we are thankful.

Here are some other recent events for which we are thankful.

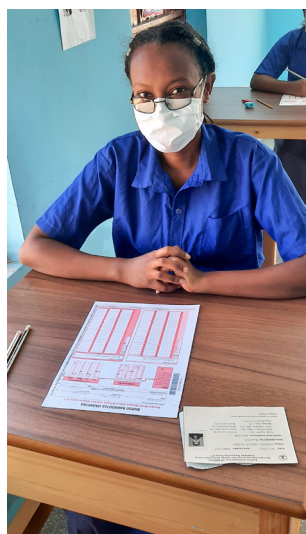
Our COVID protocols and safety measures were approved by the local education inspection committee and our schools were allowed to re-open at the end of November. Students will have about a month and a half of review time and then be promoted to the next grade level. Many local

schools have not yet reopened due to failure to meet COVID safety requirements or because parents are hesitant to send their children to school where safety protocols are not enforced. Parents and guardians of the Rafiki students know we are doing our best; all but one Rafiki day student has returned.





Our grade 8 students (two of them are day students) are the first group from Rafiki Ethiopia to sit for national exams. While school was closed, the students productively used their time to study and review and to complete work that the teachers provided for them. All the students expressed confidence going into the exams, and we are hoping to hear great news when the results are released mid-January.



Construction of two school buildings—another primary school and a new senior high school and science lab—are well underway. God-willing, both will be done for the start of the 2021-2022 school year in September and we will be able to welcome many more needy day students from the community. Also, the senior high school has received official pre-accreditation status from the regional government! This is very good news, as accreditation can sometimes take years to be approved.



Rafiki's church partner, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), is the happy recipient of more than two thousand study Bibles and books for use by their seminary students. The books and Bibles were donated by the Rosemary Jensen Bible Foundation and came on our most recent shipping container from the USA. Also, EECMY has translated the Ephesians Rafiki Bible Study into Amharic and Afan Oromo for use in their churches throughout the country! Another promising development with this church partner is the formation of a committee (including Rafiki) to explore how to foster high quality Christian education in church schools. Right now, the government's secular education policy makes this nearly impossible. Church leaders are petitioning for change and are looking for better education models.



Prayer Requests

At the end of August, Tekle and four of our staff tested positive for COVID-19; three of them were asymptomatic, but Tekle and Worku (the head of maintenance) were sick. Their recovery from COVID has been a long haul. Both have lingering symptoms of headaches, fatigue, brain “fog,” and an occasional cough. *Please pray for Tekle and Worku to regain their full strength and health.*

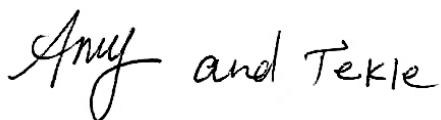
Additionally, some of our older teenage boys have engaged in persistent dishonest behavior. *Please pray for repentant hearts, changed attitudes and behavior, and wisdom for the Rafiki Mothers and Missionaries as we navigate the challenges of raising more than forty teenagers!*

Also, there has been some conflict and instability in northern Ethiopia between the federal government and a group called the TPLF. There was a military operation in the Tigray region, and though that is officially over, there is still ongoing conflict. Many people have fled the area and are refugees in Sudan. Our area is far away from this, and things have been peaceful here. *Please pray for God's continued protection of the Rafiki Village, staff, children, and missionaries.*

And finally, Tekle and I are hoping for the possibility of some much-needed rest and relaxation in February and March as we consider traveling to Florida for vacation. Tekle has not had any extended time off since early 2019. *Please pray for our continued safety, good health, wisdom, perseverance, and joy. God is with us!*

Thank you. We love you and are continually grateful for your love and support.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy and Tekle". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first names being more prominent than the word "and".

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