



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

September 2021 – Amy Ketcham and Tekle Kumera

“Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle’s!” (Psalm 103:1-5 NLT).

Dear friends and family,

This August, Tekle and I celebrated our fifth wedding anniversary and this September marks six years that I have served at the Rafiki Village in Ethiopia. It is amazing to consider how much growth has taken place in the children, the staff, the Village, and Rafiki’s work over the last six years.



When I first arrived, our school had fewer than twenty day students and only went up to grade four; now there are nearly 170 day students and we have students entering grade ten! In 2015 the youngest Rafiki resident children were in preschool; now they are preparing to enter grade four. Over the last six years, we have built a junior high school and are finishing construction on a senior high school and a second primary school building which we hope will be completed soon.



The second primary school

Rafiki teachers have grown in their biblical knowledge and application, English fluency, classical pedagogy, and classroom management. Rafiki students continue to grow in their self-discipline, diligence, knowledge, understanding of the good, true, and beautiful, and their love of learning. The fruit of God’s work in Rafiki is spreading and many people want to send their children to our school. Spaces are limited; for fifteen openings in the most recent EC1 (preschool ages 3.5 to 4.5) cohort, more than 500 people applied!



Recent GL8 grads the day they completed their national exams; these kids were in GL3 when I arrived in Ethiopia



EC1 students this past school year

Forty-two of our fifty-one resident children are teenagers now. As they are maturing physically, emotionally, and spiritually, they are also taking on greater responsibility and leadership roles in school and at the Village. Some are part of a leadership/discipleship team being mentored by missionaries Esther and Sarah. One member of the team volunteered to move to another cottage where some of the boys were seriously struggling with dishonesty and disrespect. Now several months later, we are seeing big improvements in attitudes and decisions. The students on the leadership team have also organized fun activities, prayer and worship times, and tutoring for the younger residents. The older residents seem to understand and appreciate that being older has its advantages and its responsibilities!

Also, this year several cottages planted vegetable gardens and the Village is enjoying fresh produce and saving on some food costs. In anticipation of potential food shortages due to instability and conflict in the country, we are growing potatoes and teff (the grain used to make Ethiopian injera) and have stocked up on supplies of dry goods, fuel, and medicines.



Mama Ebise and Yeabsira proudly displaying veggies they picked from the garden

Recently all but nine of the resident children visited their extended families for several weeks. This time with their families is so important for several reasons. Mainly because it develops a better understanding of their culture and the typical way of life for most people in Ethiopia; it also helps them to know their families and backgrounds better and enables them to experience some independence away from Rafiki. And the visits bring into focus the many ways that God has blessed these children through Rafiki and that He has a plan and purpose for them! The feedback we received from the children's families indicated that the kids were helpful, friendly, and mature. One student wrote about her recent time with family, "This visit has been another opportunity to help my family more, and while helping them, it gave me a chance to know them better and share with them the gospel."

Another exciting area of growth is Rafiki's partnership with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), a Lutheran denomination with more than 10 million members. Beginning when the communist Derg regime was in power in the 1970s, church schools were forced to close and a secular education policy was established in the country, essentially banning all private schools from providing any religious instruction. Church leaders are now boldly petitioning the government for the right to operate private schools that teach Bible and use Christian curriculum. Earlier this year, Amy was invited to speak at an education symposium in Addis Ababa and to introduce church and government education leaders to classical Christian education (CCE) and how Rafiki is implementing it. At the Village, we have also hosted several large groups of EECMY seminary faculty and private school teaching staff for training in CCE. By the start of 2022, we hope to begin a 1-year post graduate study in CCE at Rafiki for qualified EECMY education leaders. Those leaders can then not only share and teach the skills and ideas they have learned, but also will have Rafiki Bible Study and school curriculum for use in their schools. Amazing possibilities!



Amy and EECMY leaders after a training at Rafiki (L-R Mr. Teklu, head of an inclusive school in Addis; Ebisse Dean of Theological School of EECMY; Rev Yonas, EECMY President)

We are so thankful for your love, prayers, and support. As you have likely heard, there is a lot of uncertainty and instability in Ethiopia right now.

Please pray for:

- *Peaceful resolutions to grievances, injustices, and conflicts, especially among various ethnic groups and the federal government; that there would be no famine and no widespread conflict*
- *Continued protection, provision, and good health for all the Rafiki children, students, staff, and missionaries*
- *The swift completion of the schools under construction; outfitting of the schools; full teaching staff and accreditation for the senior high school*
- *Wisdom, joy, and perseverance for Amy and Tekle as they navigate many challenges and job responsibilities.*

Love,

Amy and Tekle

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