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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



Anna Liebing

PO Box 1018
Mzuzu, Malawi
EAST AFRICA

Contact information
Email:
AnnaL@RafikiFoundation.org
Missionary #253

“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”
(1 Corinthians 1:21-24).

Dear friends and family,

Each term, I choose a passage of Scripture that my teachers and I memorize together and review several times a week until it has really sunk into our long-term memory. This is part of our passage from this term, and as we recited last week, I was struck afresh with gratitude for its truth. Christ is the power and wisdom of God; His gospel, the unifying truth of the universe that transcends all places, peoples, and times. No matter where in space or time we look, most people find Christ folly and a stumbling block. But those who are called see through the torn curtain, imperfectly but truly, the beautiful light of eternal truth that is Christ Himself. The sight unifies those who witness it: Jews, Greeks, young, old, American, African, rich, poor, educated, simple. All who love the Lord come together under one banner, and on the foreign mission field, I have the privilege of experiencing that with unusual clarity every day.

In the past couple of months, I have been even more conscious of these truths as a handful of visitors have been here in Malawi. Their coming, and our work here, must look like folly to the world, but in truth, the power of God and the wisdom of God are at work!

First came my parents, Dave and Ellen, and their decision to come appeared to be folly in many ways. My dad finished an exhausting school year and got straight onto a plane for a grueling 32+ hour trip. My mom struggles with physical pain and vertigo, and we talked round and round about whether it was possible or wise for her to attempt this trip. In the end, though, she prayed for sustaining grace and braved the journey. They arrived, amazingly, in pretty good shape and almost at once jumped into work at the school—observing, teaching classes, leading teacher training, and bumping up and down African roads on various outings. Suffice it to say, this was not the lazy, sleeping-late, beach-lounging, guilty-pleasure-reading vacation that most people envision when they long for summertime.

Ah, but what blessing and joy! A blessing to me to have my parents see and experience my life here in Africa, to have time to talk and pray and worship and just have fun with them. A blessing to the school to have such experienced and wise teachers observing and helping (several teachers begged them to stay!). A blessing to our resident children to watch and interact with them and receive some one-on-one time with them. Many came to me saying things like, “you are so lucky to have such parents...your mother has the most beautiful voice...your father is so wise...” Aside from all that, the Lord gave unusual sustaining grace,

and both of them physically weathered the long trip and the two weeks here remarkably well. Folly to the natural eye, but the power of Christ was beautifully at work!



A coming together of worlds: my parents, my “Malawi parents” Jay and Maureen, and now dear Malawian friends Flemmings and Velepi



Mom and dad experiencing their first African market day

Less than two weeks later, our Home Office team arrived for a visit. When the Home Office travels to Africa, they come like a benign whirlwind moving at 60 mph, visiting 4-5 different countries for just a few days each and packing dozens of engagements into days that run full steam from dawn to long after dark. Folly, no? But we see the power and wisdom of God in them. We see it in their love and passion for the children and national staff, in their detailed inspections and advice for the improvement of the school and campus, in their many meetings with church and university partners, in their facilitating of widows’ groups, and in their warm fellowship around meal tables with missionaries and staff. This trip to Malawi produced some exciting plans to move our RICE (teacher training) Program forward to what we hope will be the finish line of accreditation, to do some important infrastructure improvements to the Village, to renovate school buildings as enrollment exceeds 350 next academic year, and also to do some key beautification projects in the school. We are excited to see these things move forward in the next few months!



Karen Elliot and Steve Kranz from Home Office meeting with local pastor, Brino, who has been mentoring our boys

Along with the Home Office arrived one last group of visitors—Kirstie, Amy, and Connie, all of whom are friends of mine from Savannah. These ladies are all classical Christian teachers and wonderful, godly women, and I was so excited to have them join us here for a few weeks. They gave up their precious summer vacation time to come to Malawi and go to work. They slipped right into the school routine, rising early to join morning devotions, working all day in classrooms, reading curriculum, sorting library books, and running an after-school drama camp. Then they spent part of their evenings eating and doing devotions with our resident kids. They worked so hard and cheerfully that when I announced their last day to the teachers, it elicited a chorus of “what? They must stay longer!”

In addition, they lugged with them three suitcases that, when unzipped, immediately began to shine like treasure chests in my headmaster eyes. Through the generosity of many friends at Independent Presbyterian Church and Veritas Academy, they had brought hundreds of Ticonderoga pencils and Expo markers (worth their weight in

Prayer Requests

- *For my partners, Jay and Maureen, to have a sweet time of furlough, and for things at the Village to be smooth and peaceful while they are away.*
- *For our senior students who leave the school and the Village at the end of July—may the Lord go with them and guard them from harm and temptation as they begin their independent lives outside of this place that has always been their home.*
- *For the Lord to raise up more missionaries to come to the field with Rafiki—having a steady stream of visitors has impressed me all the more with visions of how much more effectively we could serve with more missionary hands at the plough.*
- *For my own fellowship with the Lord to remain steady and vibrant in the midst of the business of ending the school year, preparing for a new one, and running the Village as the sole missionary on site.*

gold here), books, stickers, and more than a dozen beautiful maps and art posters for our classrooms. Plus a few beloved U.S. culinary delicacies for me—yes, that’s right, Swedish Fish and Mac and Cheese. And the pièce de résistance—about four dozen pairs of beautiful (mostly brand new) sports shoes for our residents. Malawian life is rough on shoes, and many of our children have been running and playing sports in shoes with holes and flapping soles, or even in flip flops. Great was the joy, and much was the whooping and hollering, as each child received a pair of shoes that had been specifically bought in their size and labeled with their own name! The “folly” of these people sending their gifts far away across the sea to children they will likely never meet, carried by these ladies who sacrificed their time, leisure, and finances to be here—it brought tears to my eyes that night.



Amy and Kirstie surrounded by very excited shoe recipients



Work hard, play hard: Connie, Amy, and Kirstie enjoying a safari lunch moments before an elephant strolls onto the scene

Now, as I sit and write this newsletter, the tables are turned. All the mzungus (white people) are gone, including my partners Jay and Maureen, who are back in the States for a well-deserved furlough. I am left as the “boss lady on high” of the whole Rafiki Malawi operation, which yet again, seems like an insane plan. One woman to run the ChildCare, teachers training program, school, dining hall, and the Village maintenance (including several construction projects)? Folly! But the Lord meets the need, and I am on steady ground, supported by a team of godly and capable national staff—Boniface, our assistant Village Administrator; Martha and Alice, our ChildCare Administrators; Gift, the assistant RICE Dean; Wisdom, heading the kitchen; and my own assistant headmaster, Emmanuel. These men and women are a gift from the Lord to this work and to me, and so we press on in His strength.

It is Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, who has drawn all these disparate people together. According to the world’s measure, these people of widely varying backgrounds, ages, and abilities from all over the U.S. and Malawi have little in common, and all have “better things to do” with their time and energy and money. Yet the love of Christ compels us, the power of God equips us, and we come together in inexplicable unity for one purpose—to proclaim Christ crucified. Through studying the Scripture each day with almost 400 Malawian students and staff, we proclaim Him. Through teaching classes from a biblical worldview and with an eye always towards beauty and excellence, we proclaim Him. Through partnership with various pastors and churches in our community, we proclaim Him. Through blessing children with much needed shoes, we proclaim Him. Through laying down our time and the work of our hands, we proclaim Him. Our Christ is power and wisdom and life and joy and peace, and nothing that we can offer to Him is too much. I am grateful for the privilege of being here to watch Him at work, and I am grateful for all of you who stand behind me to make it possible for me to do so. Keep on, my dear friends, with Christ with you, Christ before you, Christ behind you, Christ in you, Christ beneath you, and Christ above you!

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna".

Anna Liebing