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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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“I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad” (Psalm 34:1-2).

Dear friends and family,

If you read the rest of this well-loved Psalm, you will see that it does not promise that the life of God’s people will be easy. It makes promises to those who look to the Lord *when*, not *if*, troubles assail, fears arise, hearts are broken, and the righteous cry out in anguish. And yet, the promise is sure—those who fear Him will have no lack—and therefore, we can rejoice and bless the Lord at ALL times. As times and seasons here at Rafiki Village Malawi have shifted like a turning kaleidoscope in the last few months, I have been living the truth of these verses.

Goodbyes

When Jay and Maureen Richards drove off the Village in mid-April, leaving me in charge of the whole shebang, it was a hard moment, followed by a hard week and a half as I got the new school term running, started acting as Village Administrator (VA), and prepared to leave for furlough (including moving out of my house so that it could have renovations and repairs done while I was away). Jane and May, troopers that they are, helped as best they could, and May worked to learn quickly since she would be the acting VA while I was away. Ten breathless days later, I said my own goodbyes to the kids and staff, promising anxious questioners that despite the seeming whirlwind of missionaries coming and going, I would indeed be back in June.

I strove to bless the Lord during those goodbyes, leaning much on memorized Scripture and hymns packed with great theological truths. But as any mom or good teacher can tell you, preparing to be away for a significant period of time and turning over normal duties to stand-ins is enough to make you wonder if the holiday is really worth it. When I collapsed into the car on the way to the airport, I certainly blessed the Lord again!

Hellos

Now the fun part—all the sweet, heart-swelling, soul-fattening hellos! I was able to catch up with Jay and Maureen and spend a few days in Capetown on our way out of Africa, and it was such a gift to be able to “play” for a few days and talk and say goodbyes outside the hurly-burly of Village life.

In Cincinnati, I plunged headlong into family time...and Skyline Chili and



One more African adventure in Capetown with Jay and Maureen

Graeter's ice cream and pizza and Thai food... you get the picture. My siblings did everything they could to give me tons of playtime and snuggles with my niece and nephews, and my mom tried to pack in as many Cincinnati summertime experiences as we could fit. When my baby sister Abby flew in from Scotland, my joy was complete ☺ The complete Liebling clan even got to attend my cousin's wedding together!



Happiness is having your arms full of nieces and nephews



No Cincinnati trip is complete without a little goofing off with Pastor Kevin Landis and fam



An all-American baseball night with the family

While I expected the family to welcome me home with wide arms, I was truly amazed and humbled by the warmth I experienced when I visited my churches in Cincinnati and Savannah. So many people went out of their way to ask good questions, welcome me into their homes, set aside time to have lunches and coffees, and generally to be incredibly generous. Worshipping together again with all these dear ones was such deep joy, and I was privileged to be invited to share about my work with Rafiki in both churches. I was able to sit down and meet with my pastors at IPC as well as the missions committee, and in Cincinnati, I was able to meet with the women's outreach group and also spend a Sunday school hour sharing about my life and work in Malawi. After what had frankly been a very draining few months, it was so refreshing to step back, reflect, and talk about the big vision of Rafiki and the fruits that I have been blessed to see in my own Village.



Catching up with dear friends in Savannah

Thank you ALL for listening, for praying, for spending time with me, and for loving me well while I was home in the States. It was easy to bless the Lord continually during this time!

Goodbye Again

As much as I love my work and my people in Malawi, it is never easy to leave family and friends and home culture, and especially those BABIES. As I approach the three year mark in Malawi, I feel ever more acutely that painful goodbyes are inevitable whichever way I turn. How does one live with pieces of your heart tucked away with people and in places scattered across continents? What a bittersweet reminder that this world is not our home, and that separation from family—whether blood or spiritual—is not natural to our eternity-hungry souls.

I honestly headed back towards Malawi with some real trepidation as I said goodbyes and came face to face with the prospect of stepping back into a situation where I will be carrying two roles—Village Administrator and Headmaster. I needed—and the Lord gave—the promise, ***"I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed"*** (Psalm 34:4-5). I do not know that I looked radiant by the time I landed in Lilongwe forty hours later with no shower and no luggage, but I did feel ready to say hello again to Rafiki Village Malawi!

Hello, Madam!

Many warm hellos were waiting for me as I walked the Village the morning after my arrival, and it certainly is nice to be missed—the grins and whispered ripples of “madam Anna!” across the student body as I re-entered school were perhaps the sweetest hellos. The pleasantries were soon dispensed with, though, as there was much to be done—as always.

May and Jane and I are still all getting acquainted with each other as a team, since I left shortly after May’s arrival. These two ladies had done a great job guiding the Village and even hosting a Home Office visit while I was away, but now we are forging a path as a leadership team with me as the “boss lady.”

Just three days after I arrived, we greeted visitors Jessica and Wilson, who came and worked hard for a couple of weeks in the school and on the PMG team. It was great to talk with our new brother and sister about the Lord and life in the kingdom—and to have a proper little group of five for missionary fellowships and wildlife excursions!

The piles of papers and stacked up meetings waiting for me waved an aggressive “hello.” We have a constantly shifting Rubik’s cube of projects and events going on across the Village—laying sidewalks where dirt paths have been, finishing renovations and repairs on missionary houses, end-of-term recitations and spelling bee and graduation planning, meetings with local chiefs about problems along our perimeter fence, audit reports, graduate internships, visiting trainee teachers from Lilongwe, and the ultimate patience building exercise of waiting and planning for news of our RICE accreditation. My head spins on some days, but I remind myself, “**my soul makes its boast in the LORD... the angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,**” for I certainly cannot manage it all by human strength.

What a blessed problem to have—too many students wanting to attend our school, too many teachers wanting to meet and talk about their classrooms and our latest theology discussion in devotions, too many churches and pastors asking for Bibles and commentaries! *Please pray for fortitude and wisdom and more missionary boots on the ground—across all ten of our countries.*

Please pray specifically for our senior class who are even now in the midst of their daunting national exams—the results of these exams weigh heavily on their future prospects. Then we will say goodbye to thirteen of our residents as they begin life outside this Village where they have grown up.

Praise the Lord for some new folks who desire to come to Malawi and are actively working to get here—Joshua Espinosa, a former student of mine from Savannah, and Bryan and Alexis McDaniel. Bryan is currently working at the Home Office until their departure to Malawi (that will hopefully take place late August/early September). The best human help that I could receive is the speedy and smooth arrival of these folks to help distribute the workload. *Please pray for their support raising process and for speedy visa approvals.*

Many blessings to you all—may we join our voices as one, even from across the globe, as we bless the Lord and keep His praise continually in our mouths!

Love,



Anna Liebing



Stopping the seniors between exams to wish them happy 4th of July



Hunting for elephants with Wilson, Jessica, May, and Jane

