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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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Missionary #247

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth... He gives power to the faint” (Isaiah 40:28-29).

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

Dear friends and family around the world,

Unpredictability has been the theme of my life the past few months. Many of you may have questions about where I am and what I have been doing lately. I apologize. It is true, I have been bounced around a bit the past few months, though. Here is the recap: On November 7 I was preemptively evacuated from the Rafiki Village in Ethiopia due to the civil unrest there. Then from November 7 to January 7 I was in Arizona with my family and friends, celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. It was particularly sweet to spend Thanksgiving with my own family; something I have not been able to do in almost 10 years!

Since January, I have been in Rwanda aiding the Rafiki missionaries and teachers by teaching all the music classes from grade 1 through 11, resulting in twenty classes a

week. I have been quite busy! I continually see how God is working through me and refining my abilities to teach music and to manage children. I even get to teach high school for the first time ever, and what a confidence booster! The secondary students here are super sweet and hard-working which makes my job a lot of fun. There was even a lesson in grade level 9 music history when I got to sing a relevant piece for them, which was a surprise for them and a delight for me.

Now, I have been given the OK to return to Ethiopia. On March 22 I will leave Rwanda and head back to Ethiopia to return to teaching there. And while only God knows the future, that is where I intend to be until circumstances lead me elsewhere.

Music is distinctly classical

One of the joys I get to experience working with Rafiki is being essential. A music teacher in a Rafiki school is not just a nice addition, as a good painting beautifies a living space. Instead, music is



Grade 3 students “writing” the notation for a known song. One student at the end of class, “Teacher Sarah, that was the best class ever!”



Enjoying my birthday at Lake Kivu in western Rwanda

one of the load-bearing walls that is required for the whole school to stand.

The classical educational model has proven time and again that schooling without the arts—visual, aural, and kinetic—is incomplete and robs students their sense of beauty in the world around them. We celebrate a God who is creative! As beings made in God’s image, He has enabled and motivated us to be creative. What a wonderful privilege to give this gift of music and creative movement to the students I teach and provide a momentary refreshment from more objective disciplines.



The “Rafiki Singers” performing special music in church

Additionally, I know if these African students (Rwandan or Ethiopian) were not in a Rafiki school, they would not be receiving music education. While there are many national schools, none of them offer music. There are no similar opportunities for children of their economic level to learn music. And if that wasn’t enough, I also get to impart the joy and love of praising Jesus through music; honoring and glorifying God with our whole minds, bodies, and souls. What more could a girl ask for? I truly feel so lucky. If any of this sparks your interest, it would be my joy to talk with you. Rafiki needs more music educators, both short- and long-term, to further our mission here in Africa.



Winning a home basketball game (Rafiki in black and white)

Thank you for your continued support and prayer through all of this. It has not been easy to live half a year of mostly unknowns. My emotions have been a roller coaster, and it has been hard to feel at rest anywhere. Yet I praise the God who knows the future and holds me in His hands. The Bible passages from the book of Isaiah that I quoted at the beginning of this letter have provided so much comfort for me through these months. Plus, all of this continues to prepare me for an eternal home in heaven without any tears, heartache, or war. What a joy that will be!

Sincerely,

Sarah McMahan

Please Pray

- *As I prepare to leave Rwanda, where I have already made dear friends and meaningful relationships.*
- *For traveling mercies from Rwanda to Ethiopia March 22-23.*
- *For reentry to Ethiopia, reconnecting with friends, teachers, staff, and students.*
- *For wisdom in my classrooms as I attempt to pick up where I left off in November.*
- *For true and lasting resolution for the conflict in Ethiopia—leaders who listen to wisdom and selflessness.*