



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

October 2021 – Maureen and Jay Richards

“Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice! Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (Psalm 105:3-4).

Dear Partners in the Lord’s strength for His work in Malawi,

In our last update, we noted that our next one would likely originate in Africa. Well, here it is! If you recall, we were expecting to depart the U.S. on July 22. However, the Malawian government shut the borders due to an uptick in COVID cases. So the Home Office in Florida re-directed us to our sister Village in Tanzania by way of Ethiopia on 90-day visas, where we settled in and began learning our roles under the tutelage of the seasoned missionaries there. The plan was to move us from there to the Rafiki Village in Zambia at the expiration of our visas, should Malawi still be closed to non-citizens. But the General Secretary of our partner denomination in Malawi made a personal appeal on our behalf to the Minister of Health, and an exception was granted. So, we hopped an ancient mini-bus with eight pieces of luggage and made an uncomfortable 9-hour ride from Tanzania to Kenya, where we were taken in by our Village there for two days, and then flew on to Malawi, followed by a 6-hour hired-car ride to our new home in the mountainous northern region. Whew!

It was difficult to leave our new friends—missionary and Africans—in Tanzania. Maureen especially endeared herself to the teachers college students and the Orphan Care Mothers in the short time we were there. One of the Mothers confided that they were praying that Maureen would remain in Tanzania indefinitely! But when they came to terms that it was God’s Will for her to move on to Malawi, they began praying that she would connect as strongly with those Mothers as she had with them, and that Malawi would be equally as blessed by her servanthood. Also, during their final Bible study together, the teachers college

students sang a “good-bye” hymn to Maureen in Swahili, and gave her a copy of the words in English. Several stated that she had opened their eyes to learning and to teaching in ways they had never known.

When we reached Rafiki Village Malawi in our travel-worn state, we were greeted by a grinning Yeen-lan, hopping up and down in excitement. This dear Singaporean lady has been the sole missionary serving here for the last two years. She has been the Village Administrator, teachers college Dean, Orphan Care Administrator, school Headmaster, Finance and Human Resources Director, Country Representative, and on and on. What a dynamo! But most of all she loves the Lord and serves the people here with her whole, loving heart. So for the last five weeks she has been our teacher and guide as we settle into our roles. Our other partner, Miss Anna, arrived a week after we did, and is also taking up her role as Headmaster.

As we learn the town of Mzuzu, we have experienced the warm and welcoming hearts of the Malawians. It hasn’t seemed odd to be the only three Wazungu (white people) in the area. But we were surprised one day at an outdoor café to see a white woman sit down with several children. Turns out this lady, her husband, and six children are U.S. missionaries to Mzuzu! And she informed us there are others! The next weekend, we attended a missionary fellowship that they hosted at their nearby compound. In attendance were nearly thirty missionaries and dependents from the U.S., Canada, Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands, and South Africa—and one Singaporean—all sponsored by biblically sound denominations, all

serving the Lord within a two-hour drive of Mzuzu. We thank the Lord for the possibility of monthly gatherings with this group.



Our neighbors just outside the Village

Meanwhile, we continue to pick up the work set before us. Yeen-lan, as empowered as she is by the Holy Spirit, has done an incredible job here on her own, but there is so much more to be done. And the realities of Africa, as we are learning, make for an interesting path forward. Much of the plant and equipment needs maintenance, so Jay is jumping into that. Of course, good maintenance relies on repair parts and experienced technicians. Both are in short supply. So we make do as best we can. We have learned to air dry laundry in the absence of a working dryer; to be flexible with the numerous power outages and loss of internet; to stock and conserve water for when the Village borehole strains to keep up with demand; to anticipate when the electrical utility goes into “load shedding;” to cook with propane and take advantage of 12 hours of daylight; and to sleep through the all-night-long cacophony of roosters, dogs, and goats that surround us on all sides. At least the pigs seem to limit their squealing to daylight hours. The kitchen, which serves over 600 meals daily, knows how to cook over open fires when the national propane supply runs out. And we have learned to be filled with gratitude in all this, knowing most of our neighbors just outside the Village live in little structures with dirt floors, no electricity, no running water, no plumbing, no window screens or mosquito netting, while cooking on outdoor charcoal fires—when it isn’t

raining. And we are also very grateful for your prayers on our behalf and financial support, as you partner with us in the Lord’s work among these precious people.



Jeremiah was Jay’s assistant, helping repair cabinets in the kids’ cottages in Tanzania



Getting to the know the kiddos gathering to start the school day

The cool, dry season here south of the equator is ending; we are going into the hot dry season, to be followed by the hot, rainy season starting in a couple months. We just returned from a three-day trip to the capital city, shopping for repair parts and items for the Village and our own missionary houses. Once out of the mountainous north region, it was significantly hotter. We are grateful for our little plateau in Mzuzu at 4,000 feet above sea level.



View from atop the water tower: children's cottages, dining hall, and teachers college in the distance



Our mission house patio

Rafiki Villages need more missionaries, both long- and short-term! Skilled tradesmen willing to teach national employees, administrators, classically-minded educators, technology experts—all are needed. Ask God to reveal to you if He is calling you to long- or short-term missions. Rafiki has scheduled a weekend training session for all willing to learn more in April 2022. Reach out to us using the contact information that follows, and we will be delighted to discuss with you the possibilities.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Prayer requests

1. *That God's mighty work will continue among the orphans and school children here that all may know His Son personally.*
2. *Security. Our national workers are often pressured to steal from the mission, because they are associated with a "rich" NGO (non-governmental organization). In addition, thrice in recent years there have been armed break-ins in the compound. Pray for protection and safety.*
3. *Miss Anna. Our partner was delayed getting to Africa because she had a severe case of COVID. Pray that she paces herself, does not overdo, and that she continues to recover completely.*
4. *Matron Martha. Our national sister who is the Orphan Care Program Assistant, contracted malaria but is better now. Pray that she continues to recover with no ill effects, and that all of us would be protected from this ailment.*
5. *Two of our young men have been a challenge. The fatherless often are. But we have seen evidence of softening hearts. Please pray for these young men.*

With Love and Gratitude,

The Richards

Maureen and Jay Richards
PO Box 1018
Mzuzu, Malawi
EAST AFRICA

Our individual contacts:

Jay: JayR@rafikifoundation.org

Maureen: MaureenR@rafikifoundation.org

WhatsApp: +1 616-635-1258

Missionary #254