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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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***“And I will make them
and the places all around
my hill a blessing, and
I will send down the
showers in their season;
they shall be showers of
blessing” (Exekiel 34:26).***

Dear praying friends and family,

It is the middle of the dry, red-dirt, dusty season now in Malawi. The particulate-laden atmosphere makes eyes itchy, sinuses sniffy, throats scratchy, and voices raspy. Coughs and sneezes are continuous in our Village. And yet despite this we have experienced *Showers of Blessings* since our last update—spiritual as well as physical. Our daily Bible study before school break has taken us through Judges and during break through the second book of Psalms. One of the hymns that we have been singing during Bible study time is *Showers of Blessing*:

There shall be showers of blessing;
This is the promise of love;
There shall be seasons refreshing,
Sent from the Savior above!
Showers of blessing,
Showers of blessing we need;
Mercy-drops round us are falling,
But for the showers we plead.

Daniel Webster Whittle (1840-1901)

The Mercy-drops have been abundant in the form of answered prayers: the restoration to health of some who have been sick including bouts of Malaria, safe and timely arrival of a shipping container with curricula for the new school year and a host of other treasures, short-term missionaries sacrificing their talents and treasure to minister with us... and on and on.

We love and appreciate all these Mercy-drops, but we are delighted that the showers have been abundant and overwhelming. Here are a few highlights.

As for the physical, and despite the dry season, we experienced an unprecedented week-long weather pattern that brought abundant, gentle rain to this thirsty land—over 1.5 inches. This re-energized our flagging garden plots, bringing in a plethora of salad greens and vegetables to augment the standard dining hall fare, to the delight of our residents. And now for some spiritual blessings.

We had the privilege to take a furlough to the U.S. from mid-July to mid-August. Chief among the many events was the wedding of Kevin, our youngest, in Colorado. We had the blessing of welcoming Aubrey Shae as our newest daughter-in-law, and Jay spoke a blessing over them and prayed at the reception in thankfulness for the union of two young people as well as the union of two families—one from Michigan and one from Kansas. We also vacationed with all kids and grandkids in Breckenridge

and Grand Lake, Colorado: hiking, river rafting, hot-tubbing... but it was also bittersweet when it came time to say good-bye.



Maureen explaining to the grand-girls why we have to go back to Africa



Credit: @nicolehenshawphoto

The next blessing: We had the privilege of attending a ceremony at a local church that was very special to us. In this service, seven of our older Rafiki residents were baptized, two more were accepted into adult church membership by experience, and several more were promoted to the final stage of their youth Christian education program before baptism. It was especially heart-gripping to see two of our Rafiki school teachers—both elders in this vestry—stand in endorsing testimony in witness to the spiritual growth wrought in our kids. For those of you reading this who have prayed for us and supported our ministry, the following pic is your fruit! Praise be to God for His showers of blessing!



Rafiki orphans with Mama Tamala after the baptism and membership ceremony

The next blessing: Each year, the Rafiki Home Office encourages all the Villages to dedicate a special time for prayer, and to use it to pray for all the programs by which Rafiki cooperates with God in expanding the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This year, our Village gathered the school children, residents, teachers, and support staff together in the RICE gymnasium for a time of purposeful prayer. Then our leadership team led the group in rounds of specific and silent prayers. Here is Jay's administrative assistant—and the man we consider our Village father—Boniface, as he leads adults and kiddos in prayer. Note the little ones gathered at his feet as they pray intensely and earnestly! They have seen practical Christianity modeled for them and they respond in spirit and in truth! What a blessing! May they mature in their faith walk until the day that they surrender their hearts fully to Jesus.

Prayer Requests

- *That every one of our children will embrace the love of Christ and be placed permanently in the palm of His hand.*
- *For new Missionary May Nealey that the Lord will provide full funding and that she will join us soon.*
- *For the Lord's favor in gaining government accreditation of our teachers' college.*
- *The Richards have now been in Africa two months past our original service commitment of two years. Pray for the granting of renewed resident permits so we can remain in Malawi and continue serving the kingdom of heaven and the people here.*



And another blessing: While the long end-of-school break continues, our residents have cycled off in staggered groups to visit relatives in their near and distant home villages. But while on the campus, they help with chores and other necessary tasks. Recently, we hired a badly needed skilled carpenter. Lukes (yes, there is an 's' on the end of his name) is a woodworking gem and also a talented trainer. So several of our boys have been helping him on his projects while he imparts to them valuable life skills. The boys love it! Here, they are repairing and refurbishing classroom desks in preparation for the beginning of the new school year in mid-September. Lukes is the one in the background in the bright blue shirt. The blessing of valuable work, of talented employees, of a willingness to invest in others, of open and teachable hearts, and of healthy, masculine, mentoring relationships with the fatherless.



And a final blessing: You! Celebrate with us! Your partnership is yielding physical and spiritual fruit in a (for the time being) dry and arid land. We are overwhelmed, with your goodness to us. With Jehovah's goodness of showers of blessing, with gratitude to our Savior, and with the privilege of witnessing the salvation of souls. Not because of our rag-filthy works, but because of His mercy and love, all undeserved. To God be the glory.

With love, Soli Deo gloria,

The Richards

Maureen and Jay Richards