



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

April 2021 – Gwen and John Cicone

Dear friends and family,

In a year of so many changes it is reassuring to know that God has His loving hand over us. Speaking of changes, over the past twenty years, we have taught at Redeemer Classical Christian School, assured that teaching at Redeemer was the path God had laid out for us. However, as our children matured, we both felt that God had a new direction for us. We discussed possible scenarios and prayed that God would show us where we should serve Him next.

During the fall of 2020, we remembered a friend who served as a short-term missionary in a classical Christian school in Africa. This organization is the Rafiki Foundation. (rafikifoundation.org) As we read about their mission focus on classical education and the great need for educators in Africa, we wondered if this might be our next step?

Africa is a beautiful, but economically impoverished, continent with a growing population. Sadly, the number of schools and teachers is not adequate. Public school classes are overcrowded with fifty or more students.



Typical African school classroom

In comparison, the Rafiki schools average eighteen students per class. In many schools there is a lack of clean water, bathrooms, and reliable electricity.

The Rafiki Villages have their own water systems and supplementary electricity. Instead of the state sponsored curriculum, students are challenged to think, speak, and write from a classical Christian worldview.



Rafiki School classroom

Why the Rafiki Foundation? The Rafiki Foundation exists to **Help Africans Know God** and to **Train Africans to Transform Africa for Christ**. Founded in 1985 by Rosemary Jensen, Rafiki operates Villages in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. The Villages provide living and educational facilities that support an orphanage, a daily Bible study program, a pre-K through twelfth grade classical Christian school, the Rafiki Institute of Classical Education (RICE), and a Widows Program. The orphans, together with day students from the surrounding area, receive an excellent pre-K through twelfth grade education from African Christian teachers using a classical Christian curriculum written by Rafiki and specifically developed for use in Africa. In addition, the RICE Program trains African high school graduates to become excellent, godly teachers using classical Christian curriculum. Providing a good Christian education is the best way to effect long lasting change to address the

physical and spiritual needs of Africa. Rafiki's goal is to train enough teachers to transform 1,000 classical Christian schools in the next ten years.

Throughout our lives we have had a heart for missions, but traditional evangelistic/church planting work did not fit with our gifts. Now we have an opportunity to use our gifts and experience as educators in classical Christian education on the mission field. After our interview with the executive director, attendance at a weekend training conference, meeting with former missionaries for their insight, discussing the implications with our children and prayerful consideration, we believe God is calling us to serve with the Rafiki Foundation in Africa. We are excited and humbled to consider how God might use us and grow us for His glory in this new chapter in our life story.



Our training group at the Home Office in Eustis, Florida in January 2021

Our current plan is to leave Summer 2022 for a two-year renewable term. Tentatively, we are planning to serve Rafiki Village Ghana as Headmaster of the pre-K-12 classical Christian school and help reestablish the teacher college (RICE). Additionally, we would help the Widows Program, lead Bible studies, and assist as needed with the operation of the Village.

An endeavor of this magnitude needs many people to make it happen. Would you consider partnering with us? Here is a list of some ways you could help us serve in Africa with Rafiki:

1. Become a prayer partner. Commit to pray regularly for us and the Rafiki ministry. We are working to create prayer groups to whom we will send regular updates.

2. Introduce us to others. We are looking for opportunities to share the work God is doing through the Rafiki Foundation in Africa. We would love to meet with friends or church groups to introduce them to this ministry and how God might use us in Africa.

3. Become a financial partner through a monthly pledge or one-time gift.

4. Sign up for our email list to receive regular updates on our ministry.

We would appreciate your prayers as we prepare to sell our house, complete the missions training, raise support, and prepare to live in another country (visas, passports, medical exams, etc.). Additionally, John is working on obtaining his Master's in Educational Leadership from Grand Canyon University before we leave for Africa next summer. We will continue to teach at Redeemer Classical Christian through the 2021-2022 school year.

We have been truly blessed with many loving friends and family. It will be difficult to leave our loved ones here. However, we are excited about this new adventure God has set before us and hope you are encouraged by the work God is doing in Africa through Rafiki. We would be happy to share more with you and answer any questions. Thanks again for your loving support.

Pro Rege (For the King),

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