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# RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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Missionary #253

*“By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you” (2 Timothy 1:14).*

Dear friends and family,

Just a few weeks ago, I was sitting in Florida during our annual Enrichment Week surrounded by fellow Rafiki Missionaries, Home Office staff, and friends of Rafiki as Rick Phillips delivered some excellent teaching about Paul’s writing to Timothy. Paul exhorts Timothy at various points to **“fan into flame the gift of God”** (2 Timothy 1:6), **“do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth”** (2 Timothy 2:15), and **“always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”** (2 Timothy 4:5). This deposit, this ministry entrusted to Timothy, was that of teaching the gospel faithfully and standing firm in the face of various sufferings. Although we here at Rafiki Malawi are not pastoring churches, as Timothy was, our speaker reminded us that our call is fundamentally the same—fidelity to Christ, His Word, and the gospel work He has called us to. And just like Timothy, we need the encouragement of our “Paul’s” and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit as we work on tasks that are far too big and eternal for our own flawed and finite abilities.

Let me give you a snapshot of our “good deposits” here at Rafiki. My news in these letters usually focuses on the school since I am the headmaster. However, there are some big things happening here in Malawi, so this is a good opportunity to “zoom out” and give a broader update. Buckle up—there is a lot going on!

## Team changes

After more than two and a half years on the field, Jay and Maureen Richards are returning home to the U.S. in the middle of April. They and I trained and came out to the field together, and we have been a close, unified team, so saying goodbye to them will be difficult. As one of our nationals once said, “they are a team—like family; Mr. and Mrs. Richards have even taken Madam Anna to be like their daughter. They love each other!”

Of course, they have been handling big logistical roles—Jay has been the Village Administrator (the “boss man” as I like to call him) in charge of all operations



Jay, Maureen, and Anna—the intrepid Malawi team for the past 2½ years!

and personnel, and Maureen has been heading the OrphanCare Program and also running the Rafiki Institute of Classical Education (RICE Teachers Training College). As they leave, a lot of transitions will need to take place. May Nealey arrived in the middle of March as a Long-term Missionary, and she will take on OrphanCare and help with some administration of human resources. Jane Hoadley, who has spent some significant time in Malawi before, arrived also in March, and she will stay for six months to oversee the RICE Program. That leaves me to take on the role of Village Administrator as well as run the school. I am thankful that Jay will continue to oversee a lot of the Village finances online for some time, and our excellent Assistant Village Administrator, Boniface, and our bookkeeper, Robert, will help me shoulder some of the workload. It is a big shift for all of us, though, on multiple fronts, and we will need grace and much prayer.



Meet May in the middle!



Shopping with Jane (middle) on her first weekend here

Plans are also in the works for Bryan and Alexis McDaniel and their three children to come to Malawi later in the year. We are fervently praying that all of their fund-raising, visa processes, and other preparations will go smoothly and quickly!

## School

In school, we are entering our third and final term of the school year, and that means crunch time as the looming, leering national exams breathe down the necks of our eighth, tenth, and especially twelfth graders. We also, unfortunately, had a big teacher shuffle at the end of term two as seven teachers left and we frantically interviewed to replace them by the beginning of the new term. This sadly happens occasionally in many Rafiki Schools—government schools periodically send out calls for hundreds of teachers at a time, offering all kinds of promises, which make these jobs highly coveted. Rarely does a teacher resist the siren call if it comes. Thankfully, the Lord provided and we have seven new teachers ready to begin with the new term, but they of course will need time to orient and train in our unique classical Christian culture and pedagogy.

We also will be preparing for a student body increase in the fall as we open our *second* third grade class and do several large renovation projects to ensure that the facilities can handle the growing student and teacher population. With limited time between school terms, we will begin some of these preparations even now, trying to keep to a tight schedule of projects (always a challenge, especially on African time). We are thankful, though, to be expanding the number of children that we can serve. The waiting list for spots in our school is well into the hundreds now, and often multiple times a week, I am stopped in town or receive a message begging for “a place for my child.”

## RICE

As I write this letter on April 9, a team of inspectors from the National Council of Higher Education is on site at our teachers training college doing a three day assessment of our program, after which they will decide whether we may be officially registered as a satellite campus of our university partner, University of Livingstonia. We have been offering our RICE courses of study for years now (some of my best school teachers are the ones who

## Prayer Requests

- *Smooth transitions with incoming and outgoing missionaries, and strength as I take on the Village Administrator role.*
- *A successful accreditation inspection for our RICE Program.*
- *Our resident students to return to the Village for term three eager to work hard, love one another, and love Christ.*



have done RICE training!), but it has been off and on with just a handful of students, and never officially accredited. This accreditation has been almost a decade in the making, and if we succeed, we will become the first Rafiki Village to be able to offer certificate, diploma, AND degree programs in pre-primary and primary education! We pray that this may come to fruition, and are thankful for the many people who have slaved over an incredible number of details to bring us to this point.

We desperately want and need teachers to be trained in this classical education program. Our school's huge waiting list as well as quite a few schools who have asked to adopt our curriculum are clear evidence that there is a hunger in Malawi for this education, but it cannot be implemented without teachers who have been trained in classical philosophy and pedagogy. If we could begin training 20, 30, 40 teachers at a time, it would strengthen our own school's staff, and also exponentially grow our ability to offer this wonderful education to other partner schools. This will also be a significant new logistical piece of campus operations and life, so Jane will (hopefully) have her hands full getting things officially up and running.

### The Kids

Of course, the heart of our Village life continues to be our resident kids, although even that is changing over time. The Village began with around 100 orphan children, and now there are thirty-two left, with another twelve poised to graduate in July. Just like in any family, it is hard to watch your children, now young men and women, leave home. When you are sending them out by the dozen, all of the struggles, emotions, worries, and logistics are multiplied. It is exciting to watch them outside the Village as young adults, though. We now have about fifty graduates spread out all over Malawi, supported on Rafiki scholarships in a variety of vocational and university programs. We experience all the ups and downs that you would expect—phone calls about dipping grades, check-ins with their local pastors, discussions about whether their allowance should include hair extensions, where internships should be, proud graduation moments, and the list goes on. And many, many prayers that they would stand firm in the things they have learned and be godly contributors to their communities—the purpose to which Rafiki dedicated these precious ones entrusted to us so many years ago.

Here in the Village, we continue to love and shepherd the younger ones to the best of our ability—pushing them towards good study habits, perusing our libraries to cultivate a good reading culture, studying Scripture together, disciplining, scheduling chores in the maize field and chicken coup, and arranging fun things like sports days and movie nights. Watching them stumble (as all kids do) sears my heart, while seeing them grow and mature brings deep joy. My favorite video recently was of our seniors carrying our littlest students on their way to the school Easter assembly, where our resident kids carried the whole student body in singing favorite hymns. Hearing them rehearsing to lead us in “Up from the Grave” makes my heart nearly burst!



A debrief with our UNILIA partners after another long day of NCHC inspections



I was thankful to worship on Easter Sunday in Lilongwe with graduates Takula (left) and David (middle)



Easter assembly with the whole school, led by head teacher Emmanuel

## The Fields are White

These highlights are just the beginning. Rafiki also has big vision and great opportunity related to Widows Programs, outreach to other schools with curriculum, outreach to thousands of church partners with Bibles, commentaries, and Bible studies... and truly, there is a great hunger here in Malawi and across our ten countries. Our limitations now are mainly time and personnel to be able to respond! The Lord has given us much to steward—a great “deposit”, as Paul might call it. But every opportunity comes along dressed up in work overalls, as the saying goes. *Please pray for the resources and people on the ground that will support these ministries. And pray for us here in Malawi to have the strength and wisdom that we need to be faithful, no matter the humanly visible fruit.* It is His kingdom, His work, and His sovereign plans that will prevail... may all glory be to Him!

**Note:** I will be in the United States on furlough during May, and I am looking forward to seeing many of you! If you would like to make sure that you see me, please email or text and let me know. I will be planning at least one or two gatherings where friends and supporters can come visit with me and hear more about Rafiki, so keep an eye out!

## Praise

- May and Jane's safe arrival and willingness to jump right in.
- Safe travels and a fruitful week in Florida at Rafiki's Home Office for Enrichment.
- All of our faithful national staff who are stepping up to take on responsibility and help smooth the way as the missionary team changes.

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna".

Anna Liebing