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RAFIKI FOUNDATION MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER



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EAST AFRICA

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Dear friends and family,

Last weekend, I was thinking much about my two church families in Cincinnati and Savannah. Both were holding their annual missions conferences, and I couldn't help but remember that it was a year ago that I myself was speaking at the IPC missions conference, telling my church about the work that I hoped to do with the Rafiki Foundation in Malawi. And one year, two moves, three planes, four newsletters, and countless prayers later, here I am sitting in my headmaster's office in Mzuzu, Malawi. It seems like both yesterday and also five years ago that I gave that presentation, and the mundane normalcies of actually doing this job can make the grand vision fade into the background sometimes. My days are a swirl of lesson plans, paperwork, broken printers, little voices singing "Oh God bless our land of Malawi", teacher interviews, internet or electricity going down (again), a knock on the door for help with a discipline issue (again), inventing hand motions to go with memory verses, curriculum orders, choruses of "good morning, Madam!" as I walk into classes, chasing lizards out of the hallways, "tuck in your shirt!", chalk dust on my hands, mud on my shoes, and "who is running in the hall again?"

We are eight weeks into our ten-week term, and most days continue to be long. Our long-suffering upper school staff has been juggling the extra workload of several missing teachers who left unexpectedly right at the beginning of term. Our primary staff is helping to mentor four RICE students through their practicums, which has been a blessing for all. Our preprimary welcomed in three new classes of 3-year-olds with all of the joys and (literal) tears that necessarily accompany training those little ones. The whole missionary staff, along with our guidance counselors, are navigating our most recent class of graduates through the ups and downs of finding and gaining admittance to their tertiary education programs. We keep very busy—my colleague Maureen has jokingly taken to saying, "hey, it's Friday! You know what that means? NOTHING."

But I also have the joys of teaching a few piano lessons each week to the children of some nearby missionaries, and the fun of helping to coach the student choir who look at each other in amazement as they discover what they are capable of. I am starting to develop a steady stream of students knocking on my door asking me to help them pick out their next library book—a literature teacher's greatest delight. This term, I have been teaching eighth grade Bible, which is the highlight of my day. I have also become basically acquainted now with the town of Mzuzu. I was proud of

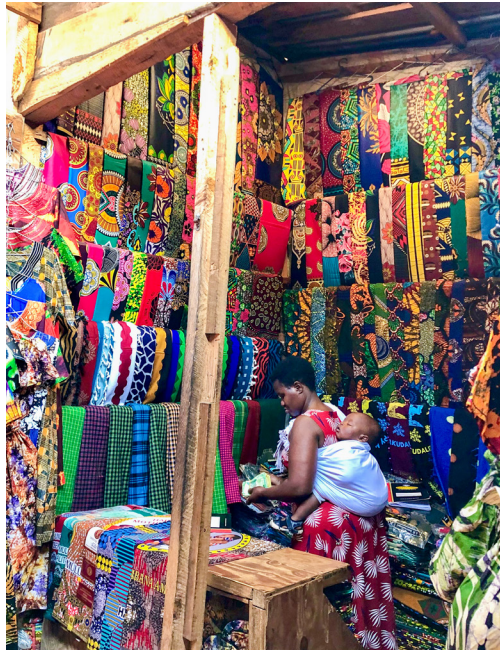
myself the first time I went alone to the market to buy fabric for new classroom curtains, and managed (while I balanced the lady's baby on my hip) to bargain my way down under budget. And as I bumped up and down the dirt road last week on my way to the little Catholic bakery to pick up some bread, I suddenly realized that life here is starting to feel normal!

Most importantly, though, the Lord has been good to give me timely and important reminders of the bigger vision to “help Africans know God and to cultivate a multitude of godly contributors.”

Several weeks ago, our Home Office team came to Malawi for a visit—their first in quite some time due to COVID. It was hectic as we prepared for their arrival and then hosted them, but so sweet to have fellowship and discussion with these people who work so hard to support us from the home front and who have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer. We talked about all kinds of things, from the pending accreditation of our RICE teacher's college to the size of desks in the classroom. It was so helpful to have a lot of practical advice, and to make tangible plans for some significant steps forward in our programs.

One evening, we invited our national leadership staff to come to a dinner with the Home Office team, and for an hour beforehand, we sat in a circle hearing updates about Rafiki Villages in other countries and Rafiki's vision for the next 5-10 years of ministry. Church partners are embracing our Bible study curriculum. Teachers colleges are growing. Rafiki is ramping up shipping capabilities so that Bibles, curriculum, and school materials can stream ever more steadily to Africa. And most excitingly, residents are growing up, and many are graduating and moving successfully into further education and independent life. Wherever they go, people notice that they are different. They more biblically grounded, more articulate, better thinkers. I looked at the faces surrounding me as we heard all of this—godly leaders, gifted missionary teammates, and faithful national partners all rejoicing in the Lord's work and calling—and was reminded of why God stirred me to pull up stakes and leave my dear friends and family to come to Africa.

The next week, in God's providence, one of Rafiki's dear friends and partners here in Malawi passed into glory. Egbert Chibambo was the one who brought Rosemary Jensen to Mzuzu, Malawi, and asked her to help the orphans here. It was he who secured the land for this Village and helped steer it through its chartering. He was a



Fabric shopping at the market



A much welcome visit from the Home Office

Prayer Requests

- *That the Lord would bring gifted, committed teachers and administrative help to our school and other programs – we have several gaping holes in our staff*
- *That our teachers college (RICE) would be given an appointment for its final accreditation inspection, and would pass*
- *That travel plans for the summer (to the ACCS conference and then to home office for training) would work out smoothly*
- *That the Lord would raise up more missionaries – short term and long term – to help advance this work in Malawi*
- *That all of our residents here in our village would be fully sponsored – we still have several who are not.*

faithful board member and beloved grandfather figure to the children here. We spent much time involved in his funeral—in America we often rush through funerals, trying to put an uncomfortable event behind us, but here in Malawi, proper respect and celebration of a life involves several days and many hours. Over the course of three days, we sat listening and praying with his widow at his home, then in pews at the church, then on the lawn at his home village, and finally on damp tombstones in the graveyard. Our student choir sang at the church service and at the graveside. As I heard dozens of testimonies to this man's perseverance, conviction, and passion for the people of Malawi, then directed my students as they sang "*What Wondrous Love*," I was again powerfully reminded of why God called me here.

I am grateful to be a small player in the grand story of Christ's kingdom moving ever forward. Grateful for the sanctification that the Lord is granting to me as I walk into each new day with all its joys, frustrations, and impossibilities. Grateful for your continued support of this work and love for me. Keep on in your own walk, and do not grow weary of doing good! For we know, as Isaac Watt's hymn reminded me last week:

"Jesus shall reign where e'er the sun,
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Til moons shall wax and wane no more!"

Opportunities

Rafiki will be shipping its Malawi container in May—this is our chance to get all kinds of wonderful things here that are not available in country. If you have any desire and ability to gather books for our library, sheet music, or musical instruments (perhaps even a piano?!), please contact me for specific requests!

Blessings in Christ,



Anna Liebing



David speaking at
Egbert Chibambo's funeral