



RAFIKI

FOUNDATION
MISSIONARY NEWSLETTER

November 2021 – Anna Liebing

“For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust...But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children’s children” (Psalm 103:14, 17).

Dear friends and family,

From the time that I was a very little girl, I remember my parents leading us in reciting these words—we said them around the school table, in the car, at the dinner table, and as we had evening devotions. At any moment of the day, the instruction could come, “Psalm 103!” (or any of a number of others). Over and over for years on end, we recited chapter after chapter of Scripture, and I must admit I often did so with a complaining heart that wanted to cry, “again?”

Now, as I walk the dusty paths of the Rafiki Village Malawi, I am reaping the benefits. On my way to school, to the dining hall, to the office, as I hurry along sweating in the equatorial sun with 100 tasks to complete—tasks which mostly feel too big for me—my mind beats out the words in time with the rhythm of my feet. “He knoweth my frame... He remembers that I am dust... His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.” How precious these words are to me these days!

There is so much that I could tell you about my first few months here in Malawi that I hardly know where to start, but the theme is essentially twofold—my intense awareness that my frame is dust, and that the Lord’s mercy is everlasting.

I arrived here safely on August 28 after a 30-hour trip, and my wonderful teammates, Yeen-Lan and Maureen and Jay Richards, were ready with open arms, dinner ready, and sheets on my bed. The first few days here, I was free to simply unpack and get oriented to the Village and to Mzuzu—I shopped for groceries, settled my house, sampled the two local expat restaurants, and slept off the

jetlag. I enjoyed the beauty of the Village and the sweet welcome of the kids and the national workers. I reveled in the beautiful, cool weather, and the mountains that surround the town. I gave thanks that I had internet to communicate with family (even if the reliability is questionable). The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting!



Beautiful Jacaranda trees blooming outside the front gate of the Village

The second week, I began to ease into my work—had meetings with my assistant headmaster, met the other teachers, and began observing classes. Pretty soon, I began clinging to the line “he knoweth my frame.” Being a headmaster of a school of 300, especially in Mzuzu, Malawi, is a God-sized task, I quickly realized. For the first several weeks, I was on such a steep learning curve both culturally and at school that I came home every day with my head spinning and my body ready to literally drop onto the concrete floor. I was learning many things every day, but the main thing that I felt like I was learning was just how

incompetent I was for this task. My frame felt like dust.

The first day of teacher training for Term 1 of our new academic year was October 4, and when I stood up that morning in front of my staff to lead the opening hymn, I was swirling with the adrenaline of “the day is finally here!” and also the fear of “I can’t believe they’re all looking at me as the boss.” I was so excited to start diving into discussions of our vision for our students... and so very aware that I had just as much to learn as to teach. And from that day to this, my day-to-day life feels like a constant back and forth tennis match between “my frame is dust” and “His mercy is everlasting.”



School books missing and nowhere to buy extras. Snafus with teachers’ schedules, which are harder than a Rubik’s Cube. Unreliable electricity and no Wi-Fi or printer for my office. Interviewing teachers to fill positions as the first week of term was already beginning. Walking about four miles a day between buildings trying to solve crises (I broke my first pair of shoes within two weeks). Conducting parent orientation with some parents who barely understood English. Going to church services where I was the one straining to understand—fearing that I would miss the inevitable instruction for the new visitors to stand and introduce themselves to the church (not that anyone could possibly miss the mzungu—we are

stared at wherever we go). Trying to find groceries and coming to grips with the fact that many “basic” ingredients are simply not here. Oh Lord, help me—my frame is dust!

But then... sweet primary children smiling at me and shyly asking to touch my hands or hair. Students singing from their toes “more about Jesus would I know!” in Bible class. My assistant headmaster staying late every day to help me lock up the school and answer my 20 “last” questions. Evening devotions with Rafiki Mothers and residents where they ask me to share how I came to know Jesus. Discussions with seniors about the sign gifts. Visiting beautiful Lake Malawi on the weekend. Going to a fellowship meal with other local missionaries. Our wonderful Orphan Care assistant helping Maureen and me learn to navigate the markets. Notes and messages of encouragement from home, providentially arriving precisely when I need them. His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!



In summary, as we near the mid-point of our first term—this is hard. This is wonderful. This is what I have prayed for, and now here I am working through the beauty and the pain, as we all do in every life change. But as I sit here typing, I am full of gratitude. The sun is setting behind the mountains outside my window, and sky looks like it’s on fire. The day is finally cooling, and a breeze is bringing over the hill faint sounds of

the children going home from the dining hall. Tomorrow I'll watch them hurrying to morning assembly and then we'll open the day with 300 voices reciting, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" So I thank the Lord – for the work He has given me, for the strength that He has promised to provide me to do it, for those He has given to walk beside me in it both here and at home.



Please continue to pray for me and for Rafiki Malawi.

In addition, please pray for:

1. *Supernatural wisdom to navigate a myriad of headmaster decisions and tasks at which I am so new.*
2. *Unity and love among the staff of teachers at school.*
3. *Physical and spiritual strength for the missionary team—myself, Jay, Maureen, and Yeen-Lan—as we all manage large responsibilities and we new ones try to learn as quickly as possible.*
4. *For our students' hearts to be soft to the Word of God, especially those Village residents who are about to graduate and leave the Village to begin their adult lives.*
5. *Pray for the Lord to raise up more long-term Missionaries to join us on the field—we are asking the Lord for at least 2 more in order to run this Village smoothly at full capacity!*

6. *All 250 Rafiki Day Students to have sponsors and be fully funded soon.*

7. *For generous giving to the Africa Expansion Campaign. Rafiki is entering a season of exponential growth. We anticipate the thousands that Rafiki is currently ministering to across our 10 countries will turn to tens of thousands. To meet these new opportunities, we are asking God for a 25% increase over Rafiki's current annual budget which could increase Rafiki's impact 10-fold.*

Note: Rafiki is now able to accept non-cash gifts such as real estate or estate bequests. Contact Rafiki@RafikiFoundation.org for more information.

The grace of our Lord be with you all!

For His Glory,

Anna

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