



Newsletter of Rev. Vance and Linda Becker at Matongo, Kenya

March 2020

## Weekly Swahili "Field Trips"

Our weeks of studying are not broken up by much except for trips into town on Saturdays, seeking out Wifi internet connection and a few supplies. We enjoy walking through the market areas and have now learned enough Swahili to have rudimentary conversations with shopkeepers in Swahili. Most are better at English than we are at Swahili, but they appear to appreciate our efforts.

Since it was time for haircuts, we went to the hair salon of a local couple we had met through the people who run this camp. Despite the fact that the newer



looking shop had no plumbing, Linda had her hair washed and dried in the process and we were both very happy with the result as well as the reasonable price.

One place we can get internet connection is the "Boma," a building from the German colonial period, now a museum. They also sell baskets made by women from local villages as a project to provide income for them.

*Pray for us,* praising God for His constant presence, thanking Him for new learning experiences, and asking Him to help us learn Swahili well.



## Life at Camp

We spend our days going to class in the building pictured here. We eat in a place like a



picnic shelter, served from a kitchen building. Two days a week our laundry is done - by hand - and hung to dry. Since it is rainy season, it often finishes by hanging in our little house for a couple of days.

*Pray for us,* praising God for His wisdom and power to provide, thanking Him for this beautiful

place, and asking Him to keep us well and mentally sharp.



## The Gospel in Swahili

We are missing midweek Lent worship but in our evening devotions are using the Lutheran Hour Ministries Lent devotions and started reading through the passion history from the Gospel of John. John uses more simple language than any other Bible writer and we have been very happy to find how much we are able to read and understand already.

*Please pray for us,* praising God for His true and living Word, thanking Him for His priceless gift of salvation, and asking Him to help us grow in faith, hope and love.

## New Friends and Neighbors

Our Swahili teacher is Specioza. She is a fun teacher acts out new words to get us to guess the meaning without saying it. The head teacher



is Tunku. He is Muslim but quite familiar with Christianity and the Bible. Our head cook, Tumaini ("hope" in Swahili) is also a pastor of a (non-Lutheran) church. The camp manager is called Baba-Dina. Adults are commonly called "Baba (father) of..." plus their oldest child's name. Dina has been the Steele's teacher.

Beside us, the other student here is a young Presbyterian woman who will train teachers of a school at a diamond mining camp in Tanzania. She has joined us a couple of times for our Sunday worship which Walter and Vance take turns leading.

amemfufua kutoka wafu. <sup>2</sup>Huko wali-mwandalia chakula cha jioni, naye Martha akawa anawatumikia. Lazaro alikuwa mmoja wa wale waliokuwa mezani pamoja na Yesu. <sup>3</sup>Basi, Maria alichukua nusu lita ya marashi ya nardo safi ya thamani kubwa, akampaka Yesu miguu na kuipangusa kwa nywele zake. Nyumba yote ikajaa harufu ya marashi. <sup>4</sup>Basi, Yuda Iskarioti, mmoja wa wale kumi na wawili ambaye ndiye atakayemsaliti Yesu, akasema, <sup>5</sup>"Kwa nini marashi hayo hayakuuzwa kwa fedha denari mia tatu, wakapewa maskini?" <sup>6</sup>Alisema hivyo, si kwa kuwa alijali chochote juu ya maskini, bali kwa sababu alikuwa mweka hazina, na kwa kuwa alikuwa mwizi, mara kwa mara aliiba kutoka katika hiyo hazina. <sup>7</sup>Lakini

There are only five of us staying at this camp, but we have had a variety of visitors. Another

resident for several weeks has been an older Tanzanian pastor, Baba-Joy. He has worked with a local man to translate a doctrine textbook into Tanzanian Swahili from Congolese Swahili, which is different. His wife's death, just weeks before we came, led to a conversation about heaven. We emphasized that it was all about being with Jesus despite many unanswered questions.

One weekend, Gerhardt, a German pastor was here for a weekend getaway. He teaches at a Lutheran seminary in Tanzania. Both he and we greatly enjoyed our visits about our faith and teachings.

Another weekend, a Seventh Day Adventist family was here, on vacation from a farm which they run as a mission. Their comment about legalism in their Tanzanian church led to a dinner table conversation about various Bible topics. There was much agreement, but we had opportunity to emphasize natural man's total inability in spiritual things and total dependence on God for everything, which He does through the means of his word.

This coming week there is a high school retreat from Dar Es Salaam to focus on mission work.

*Please pray for us*, praising God for His unfailing love, thanking Him for His many gifts and servants, and asking Him to give us opportunities to share our faith and do it well.

## ***Bible reflection***

Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan in response to a young man who wanted assurance of his salvation by keeping the whole law of God. In it, the Priest and Levite kept the ceremonial law's requirement of them that they do not come into contact with a (quite likely) dead body, but therefore failed to keep the law to care for their neighbor. The Samaritan did, but as a heretic, in no way kept the first table of the law.

Therefore, they all, like us, are like the man beside the road, half (that is, spiritually) dead. Jesus,

although he was, like the Samaritan, despised by "good" people, is the only one ever able to keep the whole law and yet, at the same time, He compromised His cleanliness by coming to us, caring for us, and paying for us to be restored.

The season of Lent is a time to recognize our failures and brokenness, but then, unlike the young man, trust entirely in Jesus for assurance of salvation so that we can go away glad.

## ***People wonder...***

*Is there Corona Virus there? Are you safe?*

There is no Corona Virus reported in Tanzania yet; and in this remote area, we are safer than in most places.

Those who may have heard of Islamic attacks on Christians in northeast Kenya do not have to worry that it is anywhere near us.

The issue here is flooding. Heavy rains started early and the river which runs past our camp is higher than any of those here have ever seen it. The zip line across the river is out of commission and there is some erosion along the bank.

The problem with swarms of locusts in northern Kenya has not hit the Matongo area.

If you wonder about a question, email [vance.becker@lcms.org](mailto:vance.becker@lcms.org)

*Please pray for us*, praising God for His knowledge of all the future hold for us, thanking Him for protection in our travels, and asking Him to give us health, endurance, and protection to us and all those in this area.

## ***Swahili sample***

Swahili, like English and other languages, has words borrowed from another language. In fact, it is based mainly on two languages, Arabic and Bantu, which are grafted together like a mythical centaur in such a way that some words are constructed in ways that follow Arabic rules while

others follow Bantu rules. That is a challenge.

Arabic words which may be recognizable to some include hadithi (story) and sharia (law). It may be by way of Arabic that some words with Hebrew origins came in, such as amini (believe), salama (peaceful), and baraka (blessed).

**If you get this newsletter in print but could get it by email instead, it could save funds for our ministry.**

## ***Connect with us.***

Email us at [vance.becker@lcms.org](mailto:vance.becker@lcms.org) & [linda.becker@lcmsintl.org](mailto:linda.becker@lcmsintl.org)

Help expand our network by liking [vance.becker.lcms](https://www.facebook.com/vance.becker.lcms) on facebook and sharing it and this newsletter with friends. Let us know about yourself and prayer requests. We will pray for you too.

## ***Financial support***

All our funding comes through the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, not just an office in St. Louis but the people and congregations. We are grateful for many generous people, for yearly & monthly gifts, and also single gifts.

A monthly or yearly gift is ideal but a start-up gift is also very helpful.

- Checks written to LCMS with Becker/Kenya in the memo can be mailed to: LCMS, P.O. Box 6861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861 or Mission Central, 40718 Highway E16, Mapleton, IA 51034-7105 ([missioncentral.us](http://missioncentral.us)),
- Give on-line at [www.lcms.org/givenow/becker](http://www.lcms.org/givenow/becker)
- Give by phone at 888-843-5267.

*Please pray for us*, praising God for daily providing out of Fatherly, goodness and mercy, thanking Him for those who are able to give generously, and asking Him to keep providing funds for this work.