



Mission Moments – East Africa

Young Family News

March 2020



Psalm 121 has been a theme passage for our East Africa field. I find it comforting in times of challenge to be reminded that the Lord will watch over our lives. May it give you comfort and peace today as well.

Psalm 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not
slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right
hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming
and going
both now and forevermore.

Pictures are from the Meru, Kenya area during recent agricultural trips.



Looking Back on Looking Forward

By Volunteer Gwen Zagore

“You are the first missionaries we have had in our area”. This was one of the first things Bishop Bernard Kugeria told us when we met him in Kathwana Town, part of the Gakombe Parish of the Evangelical Lutheran Conference Ministerium of Kenya. It set the stage for our East Africa Agricultural Consultancy Team to create a relationship with the people from approximately 15 congregations, stretching over 3 counties with diverse climates and soils, crops and resources. The area we visited is situated North of Nairobi, between Mt. Kenya and Mt. Meru. As we soon found out, they all have one thing in common; to be part of a fellowship of believers bigger than themselves, possibly bigger than their desire to improve the farming techniques on their shambas (small farms). We set out on our 14-day journey with the guidance of Reverend Amon to translate both words and culture for us.

To say that the resources are diverse over the area we travelled is an understatement, yet God’s people are similar. As the “soils person” on the team, the land around the first several congregations we visited made me wonder how the people managed to raise any crops at all. The soils were red clay, strewn with small rocks and often displaying signs of ongoing erosion. They rely mainly on millet and green grams (similar to a lentil) for sustenance. Most farmers have goats and chickens to supplement their diet. As we neared the slopes of Mt Kenya, with its rich volcanic soil and cooler climates, it was as if we travelled to a different country. The land produces bananas, oranges and coffee in addition to corn and beans, yams and arrowroot. Livestock includes cattle. Regardless of the soil or resources, we encountered one underlying issue in every place; the inability to look forward to the future when harvested crops are depleted and therefore, so is the parents’ ability to care for the family. As it was explained to us, lack of looking forward and planning for what is to come, is a cultural norm. “We live for now, not thinking about what is to come.” As we learned about each group, we also tried to explain that it a good and right thing to do to see that your family is fed and the money flow positive.

obligations are met. We spoke of Christian family life, of man and wife being one flesh, of Jesus giving himself for the church as a man can give himself for his bride. The Bible speaks of being wise and it is a Godly thing to use that wisdom to care for your family in a Christian way.

In addition to the idea of looking forward to plan, as a Christian man and wife, for what may come, one of our Team goals is to provide some practical ideas to assist in producing better crops and storing them without excessive loss to pests.

Sometimes, our best ideas can be lost due to cultural differences and the obvious language barrier. “So”, I thought, “how can I express the importance of preventing soil erosion by showing instead of telling?” I found an idea on-line that I asked if I could try. We modified it slightly to work while travelling from church to church. The model consists of 3 empty 2 liter soda bottles, cut apart to form a boat shape. Each is filled with soil. One is left bare to represent no cover left on a field. One is thickly covered with dried grasses, corn husks, bark or whatever is found in the area, to represent mulching on a field. One is filled with a large chunk of sod, dug up with the roots intact. They are laid on their sides on a table with the bottle opening extending beyond the edge of the table. Volunteers are asked to come forward to hold empty plastic cups under the opening as I make it rain by pouring out a water bottle onto each “field”. The bare soil washes into the cup. The mulched soil retains water for a little while and comes out much cleaner. The sod retains water the longest and only some of the water comes through, and it is almost clear. The demonstrations meet with applause and sounds of amazement as the people see for themselves the damage rain can cause and the practical ways they can retain that precious resource in the soil, where they need it so desperately. At each place, everyone agreed to change the habit of clearing a field, but to leave cover. I realized as well that perhaps my explanation of contour farming is not the same as what the farmers call “terracing”. Building on the idea that showing works better than telling, I taped a large sheet of blank paper on our make-shift easel, grabbed some colored markers from our supplies and drew a simple hill with alternating rows of crops and thick green lines representing grasses. The response is giggles at my drawing skills and discussion of what I proposed. It was very

Once again, we provide an idea to help look forward to conserving the soil for future crop production.

The impact of our visit goes far beyond agricultural training. While we were teaching at the final church, the Bishop left for a little while to visit the area chief who was home recuperating from a broken leg. Upon his return, he told us that the chief was so moved by what we were doing and teaching there, that he donated land in order to establish a demonstration farm for the church. He said he wanted to keep us here, like Peter wanted to keep Moses and Elijah and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was sorry not to meet us but looks forward to a life together with us. The relationship, the "life together", that is now established is perhaps the most important outcome of this whole trip. On Transfiguration Day, the Bishop's sermon spoke of the unity that exists between Moses, Elijah and Jesus. He spoke of the continuity from the Law and Prophets that continues through Christ. He spoke of the confirmation that Jesus is God's Son. He went on to say that the work of Luther continues the true teaching of Christ for us today. "We continue to confirm that we are the same people, same family, created in His image. People say that the Lutheran Church is just a small church in the village, but we have unity with Lutherans all over the world. We are all members of the church of Christ!" All of the members of the congregations, in the small villages we visited, separated by great distances, now know that they are a part of something much bigger than themselves and their village and their congregation. They have confirmation that they are part of a great fellowship of believers that covers the whole world.

Rev. Shauen Trump continues to meet and work with the ELCM to establish a relationship between them and the LCMS. It was he who suggested that the Agricultural Team travel within that Synod for the first time. Krista Young, the short-term volunteer coordinator, made the arrangements on our behalf. Being the first ambassadors to the ELCM from the LCMS was an honor and a privilege. What an unbelievable gift it is to me that the Lord would use me to be part of showing his people in Kenya that they are part of a fellowship of believers that encompasses the world! We truly look forward to a continuing relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ!

1. The Team: Gwen, Krista, Bishop Bernard, Rev Amon, Delano and Linda
2. Congregation after the presentation
3. Linda and Gwen receiving gifts of gratitude
4. Gwen demonstrating soil erosion
5. Delano and Linda teaching.



Current teams have been postponed due to travel restrictions.

There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](https://www.lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."



Evangelical Lutheran Conference Ministerium of Kenya (ELCM) shared how his grandfathers farmed years ago.

Prayers and Praises:

How can we pray for you? *Please share with us your prayers and concerns so we can lift each other up in prayer.*

- We pray with all of you for the effects of COVID19 and the changes happening around or world.
- We pray for peace and comfort for all who are struggling.
- We pray for volunteers whose trips have been postponed and whose plans have drastically changed.
- We pray for Bishop Bernard Kugeria, Pastors and the people of The Evangelical Lutheran Conference Ministerium of Kenya
- Thank God for agricultural missions.
- Pray for our East African Team of missionaries and families.
- Pray for strength and joy in ministry.
- Pray for Joel and all teachers who are adapting lessons for online teaching, as well as parents who are sorting continued learning at home.
- We pray that we will still be able to travel to the US for Home Service to connect with all of our prayer warriors and supporters.

To God be the Glory!!!

Planning for Home Service mid May – mid June 2020 continues with caution. We will see what happened in the next few weeks. However, we would like to continue with possible dates so please reach out to us.
krista.young@lcms.org
as soon as possible.

To continue to support the LCMS through the work of the Young's, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The LCMS	OR	Mission Central
P.O. Box 66861		40718 Highway E 16
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861		Mapleton, Iowa 51034

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