



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

May 2020

## Finished and Continuing On

We finished our scheduled 12 weeks of Swahili language lessons on April 28 and celebrated with a raisin bagel, made by one of the staff. The challenges of “meeting” with our teacher online were eased some by our getting the use of a small camp office in a spot where our phones can get a connection indoors! No more running from rain, and we can even work at night.



But, because of Corona Virus shut downs and waiting still for our Kenya work permits to be processed, we are not yet heading for the college at Matongo as had been planned. In fact, the school itself is still closed for now. So, we will stay where we are, probably for another month at least.

Meanwhile, we continue our Swahili studies. We have some self study books, lessons to review, plenty of vocabulary to keep learning, and Swahili readers,

including Bible story books. One of Vance’s projects is learning to use the Swahili Lutheran hymnal used for worship in Kenya, including at Matongo. It is fascinating to see familiar hymns and liturgies with the same tunes but very different words.

We use the Creed and Lord’s Prayer in Swahili as part of our daily devotions.

*Please pray for us,* praising God for His wisdom and power

to provide, thanking Him for new learning experiences, and asking Him to help us learn Swahili well and to keep us mentally sharp.



## Time to Bloom

We try to go for a walk every day, often on the trail along the river. It is easier now that the rainy season is ending and winds are bringing the dry season. This seems to be the time that many flowers are blooming. Most are tiny but each one makes a difference.

May we too respond to winds of change and new seasons by blooming where we are planted, sharing a little sweetness and leaving some seeds. Each of us may only do a little but every one of us makes a difference.

*Please pray for us,* praising God for His unfailing love, thanking Him for guiding us through changing times and mysterious ways, and asking Him to help us grow in faith, hope and love.

## More to Learn

Beside our study of Swahili, we are taking an online class on “missiology” (the study of missions) through Concordia Theological



Seminary, Ft. Wayne. We are over half way through.

We are also doing some online training workshops from LCMS International Mission. One ongoing class is on using online media to connect with our supporters. There are limits to what we can do from here but one thing we are trying is making short videos. Another workshop is on Community Health Evangelism. It will train us to teach others, such as Deaconess students, how to do classes on health and community improvement while sharing the gospel in the process.

*Please pray for us,* praising God for His true and living Word, 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

In the Bible readings about Jesus' resurrection appearances, people always hear about it before they see Jesus: the women from the angels, the disciples from the women, Thomas from the other disciples. Even the two walking to Emmaus didn't truly see Jesus until after He had explained how the whole Bible told about what he did.

I think this is because it is always God's word that causes true faith, not any signs, although they are used to strengthen faith. The Pharisees, for example, saw the same signs but didn't have faith because they wouldn't listen to what Jesus said.

Still, Jesus used signs. He told the disciples to give him fish to eat and told Thomas to touch him, although he then didn't seem to think he needed to. But I think when Jesus tells us to do something, we should. Jesus knows, "Sure you need it. I know you guys!"

God gives us signs too. He tells us of His power, then shows us in creation. He tells us of His love, then shows us His provision and cares for us in the church. He tells us He washes away sins, then gives us baptism. He tells us He shed his blood for us, then gives us Holy Communion. Like Thomas, we may think when we already have faith we can get along without fellowship with believers, Communion, or daily devotions. But Jesus knows we do!

This is to train us to believe His word without the signs, because some things cannot be seen. We can't see what Baptism does or Jesus' body in Communion. We can't see forgiveness – that is the hardest thing to believe. We have to take his word for it. The day will come when we must trust God for eternal life, despite all appearances. Jesus' resurrection shows us that it is true.

*Please pray for us*, praising God for giving us everything by grace, thanking Him for His constant presence and protection, and asking Him to increase our faith and love.

## People wonder...

*It is hot there?*

It is not always as warm as we may have expected. Where we are now in Tanzania is fairly high in altitude, so it never gets very hot. It is cool at night and comfortable with long sleeves on a sunny day.

In fact, the dry season, which is coming, is even cooler than the rainy season, and windy as well. It feels like fall, especially as the leaves of trees dry up and fall. We are told that if we are still here in a couple of months we will see our breath.

Matongo, where we will go in Kenya, is also high in altitude and the temperature will be similar, even though it is very close to the equator. The fireplace which will be in our house there is apt to get some use.

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 holds for us, thanking Him for all those who work along with us, and asking Him to give us health, endurance, and protection to us and all those in this area.

## Swahili sample

One of the familiar hymns found in the Kenyan Swahili hymnal is one that was first written in Swahili in Kenya. Maybe you know it too. It is LSB #466. Here are the words. If you try to sing it, remember, every vowel has its own syllable.

1 Mfurahini, Haleluya, Mkombozi amefufuka. Amefufuka, Haleluya, msifuni sasa yuhai.

Chorus: Tumwimbie sote kwa furaha. Yesu ametoka kuburini. Kashinda kifo, Haleluya, Haleluya, Yesu yu hai.

2. Amefufuka Mkombozi. Haleluya, tushangilie. Nguvu mwovu ameshinda. Ametuondoa kufani.

3. Malaika aliwaambia wanawake, "Msiogope. Sasa kaburi lipo tupu, kwani Yesu amefufuka." Chorus

4. Amebatilisha Shetani. Amewaletea wokovu. Kwa hiyo

ninyi mtangaze, ni hakika, Yesu ye hai."

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Email us at [vance.becker@lcms.org](mailto:vance.becker@lcms.org) & [linda.becker@lcmsintl.org](mailto:linda.becker@lcmsintl.org), or send us postal mail at the Mission Central address below.

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## Financial support

All our funding comes through the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which is 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,
- Give on-line at [www.lcms.org/givenow/becker](http://www.lcms.org/givenow/becker)
- or [missioncentral.us/becker](http://missioncentral.us/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.