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# TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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Laurie and Burnell Schaetzel Hill, and Ivy Metz

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## *Our New Home*

After four days of weary travel, we arrived in Manow (pronounced as in Spanish Mano). Time has become less confusing to our bodies, and it is amazing to be here. I awoke this morning at 5 am to the beautiful sounds of Tanzanian-African music, the choir voices from the nearby church, amidst the calls of birds in the trees above our little cement house at the top of the hill. From the front porch, sitting with local black tea warming my hands, I watched sun rise over the distant Livingstone Mountains as the light woke the huge trees, fields of purple flowers and the village homes below me.

I feel I am home. I love the quiet of this small village, the women wearing their brightly colored kitangi and kanga cloth as both skirt and shawl, and the joyful faces as we greet people in the Nyakusa language. We receive the most joyous reaction from the villagers, whether it is a big smile or head thrown back laughter. We choose to believe they appreciate that we are speaking a few words of the local tribal language, and yet know we probably sound nearly ridiculous. The native language is Nyakusa. The children later learn Swahili, and also some poor English in primary school.

As I prepare dinner, I open the back door to stand on the stoop overlooking a cemetery, church, and a stand of 4 huge trees of unknown species. I pick out the stones and remaining shells of local beans and toss them into the grass and wildflowers behind the house. It feels so normal. The house is simple, yet comfortable. The water comes to the house from a small water tank behind the house. The

plumbing is simple; our bathroom sink is small, old and has only cold water. The shower barely spits water on us, heating a quart of water at a time. That is, if we have electricity. But we are saved from our stinky selves by the gas fired stove to heat water and a smallish red plastic tub for our daily bathing. I can sit in it if I hang my knees and feet over the edge. Quite nice!

Children who attended the English program from past years have stopped by to visit. They were eager to see Nancy. They adore her as does the Manow community. We benefit by meeting LOTS of children who come into our house to show off their English. The girls are shy and need encouragement to use their voices. Trust me; we are here to help them be strong! It has been 12 years since Burnell and I have been in Tanzania. So much arises in me: a feeling of absolute joy for being back to the happy people and the red soil of east Africa, the familiarity of the bright colored clothing of the women in contrast to the dull grey of houses, the small shops on the dusty rutted streets filled with people walking every direction often carrying goods to the market or a five-gallon jug of water on their heads. I love this place yet there is a huge part of me conflicted by the poverty yet comforting simplicity of life, the hard work of these people yet the joy displayed.

Tanzania. It is dirty, it is poor, it is jovial and full of exuberant greetings on the streets. It is colorful, it is hard. It is a long hot walk to the crowded market of rickety stands, women sitting with stacks of 10 potatoes, tomatoes or carrots or charcoal to sell. It is the village bustle amidst a struggling landscape of stripped mountains filled with farming in order to feed

its people. It is truly free range eggs and Tangawezi ginger soda. It is the dirt paths between banana trees, fields of tea and homes. It is the rooster and the church bells ready to awaken anyone sleeping beyond the 6:30 am sunrise that lasts a mere two minutes so close to the equator. It is the warming sun that starts the day by rising above the Livingstone Mountains, fresh enough to encourage you to sit everyday on the front step with a mug of Tanzanian tea to stir your love and appreciation of life as you start your day.

We are happy to be here. *Laurie*

### ***A Wonderful Team***

I came to this adventure as a retired teacher and Assistant Principal, who had been away from the field a few years, when I saw the TTF Bulletin Board at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church. As an administrator I had missed teaching and this looked like the perfect opportunity to experience the joys of teaching again on a smaller scale. So I embarked on this journey as an “expert.” I had my concerns about this pair with whom I had been matched, Laurie and Burnell Schaetzel-Hill. As we trained by Skype on Saturday afternoons Burnell posed some questions that only someone who had been teaching the stuff would know, but I, in my ‘expertness’ was appalled. Well it turns out and I am thrilled to tell you that I, in my expertness, was absolutely wrong about them. They had both had experience teaching and it is just wonderful to admit I was SOOOO WRONG about these two, and tell you just how wonderful this experience has been and why.

Each day we return home and after a snack and tea we usually get busy planning the next day. Some days we choose which topics we’ll teach; other days, depending on who has the energy, we let that person assign us our tasks, because we haven’t the energy to choose. We do this first because we need the laptop to print activities and quizzes for the next day. Since we never know when we’ll have power, we get that done first. No worries if our lesson needs refreshing, there’s lots of opportunity for review. After that we check the current day’s work together; either we split the class and each of us grades 1/3 of the papers, or we each grade a separate section of the

activity to ensure there’s consistency in each section. There’s always much discussion: Are we being too hard? Is this fair? I want to acknowledge his/her improvement.

Each morning we head off rejuvenated with a clear plan of how the day will go. Yet as lessons unfold, we find ourselves chiming in, emphasizing a point, making a connection to a previous lesson, perfecting a spelling or even reversing a dyslexic “d” to a “b.” Egos haven’t shown themselves. The teamwork spills over into household chores and shopping, as well. The assistance is natural and easy. We sing tunes from our youth together, create new ditties on the way from the market, have big laughs, and just generally function well together. We’ve declared ourselves a Wonderful Team. We feel our willingness to learn from each other enables our students to learn more. We’re counting on our students’ successes proving us right. *Ivy*

### ***Settling In***

The Tanzanian Teaching Foundation celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last year and the year 11 Pre-Form 1 English course is in full swing with three volunteers, Laurie and Burnell Schaetzel-Hill and Ivy Metz. Our first week in Tanzania following our arrival was dominated by meeting key Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary staff and Manow community members, getting the volunteer house, library, curriculum and living routine in order. We visited the local medical dispensary and the nearby 120-bed Itete Hospital, delivering medical supplies from closing my medical practice. The supplies were much appreciated and we received a wonderful and detailed tour of the medical facilities by Dr. Clinton, the Medical Officer in Charge.

We are content and comfortable with the accommodations and are getting acquainted with the routine power outages that occur every 1-3 days, typically last 4-8 hours, less commonly 12 hours and lengthen with heavy rains. The maximum outage has been approximately 24 hours during our first monsoon rain of the same duration. The Manow community water supply was interrupted for approximately 24 hours last Tuesday, though the ample backup stores of water jugs allowed us to wash dishes and cook with boiled water. Nancy reported an 11-day water outage several years back necessitating hauling water from the lone reserve

community water spigot a quarter mile uphill from our home.

We have completed our second week of teaching English to our 40 students, and are finally getting our teaching duties into a semblance of 'routine'. Week one was exhausting, learning the ropes of accessing the computer teaching files, learning the grading system, calculating grade percentages for the daily quizzes and Friday exams, and taking Nancy's lead on work flow, teaching and disciplining 40 rambunctious early adolescent Tanzanian youth most of whom don't understand anything we're saying.

The students are age 11-15, and need considerable structure to manage the volume of material we are dispensing at fire-hose capacity. Week 1 was spent teaching 'to have and to be' verbs with repetitive review, sentence writing practice and one on one assistance. The curriculum is well laid out with multiple resources and modes of presentation (flash cards, songs, games, cross word puzzles...) allowing us to pick and choose from many options to fit the needs of the students and challenges of the lesson plan at hand. At times, the volume of material feels hopelessly excessive given the challenges with student retention, but 'sweet spot' moments are occurring with increasing frequency demonstrating the efficacy of the curriculum, and satisfaction that we are slowly accomplishing our task of teaching these beautiful young spirits a new language that will change their lives. *Burnell*

***Send email!!***

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you, and how you like the newsletters this year. We may not be able to respond as quickly as in the US, but we really like hearing from you.

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If the newsletters inspired you to think about teaching in the program, please let Nancy know. Her email is [wintersnl@comcast.net](mailto:wintersnl@comcast.net)