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# TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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## *Reflections on the First Month*

After a month here, we are all settled into a routine of teaching and living. I find the culture and people of Tanzania to be wonderful and an easy adjustment. We are in the rural highland, tea-producing area of the country with clear, breezy days and cool nights. While the equatorial sun is intense, the heat is not oppressive. Crops of rapidly-growing maize, potatoes, tea and coffee are painstakingly cared for and maintained. The people are wonderfully open, welcoming, and kind. Chris and I are in the choir and love the music and the other choir members. The community is safe, incredibly hard-working and clean. Food is somewhat bland but plentiful; and electricity, although sporadic, is accessible to almost everyone. We love it here. *Norm*

## *Smiles and Struggles*

We are in our fourth week of class and it is going by very fast! Many of the kids are catching on quite well while others are still struggling. One of the students named Christian is really interesting. He is older and is very quiet. Most of the time, he does not really participate voluntarily or show any significant interest in studying hard. Lately though, we all have all been giving him more attention, and while his default is still to stay quiet and a bit sullen, every once in a while, he will smile and his face will just light up! He has such a lovely smile!



The students are currently writing thank you letters to their parents, and while I was correcting Christian's letter today, it was so clear how much he loves and is loved by his family. That made me a bit teary eyed. While he didn't write a lot in his letter, what he did write was very sweet. I really hope he buckles down and works harder, so he can truly benefit from having a better grasp of English. *Lucy*

## *Students' ... Names and Personalities*

Our students' names have been a fun and interesting discovery. While many have biblical names, others have names perhaps revealing the joy of their parents at welcoming a new baby into the family, such as Glad, Gift, Gladness, Goodluck, Peacemaker, and three girls named Angel. It is a joy to observe the intelligence, curiosity and growing assertiveness of the young women in our class. At first a bit shy, quiet and demure, they are blossoming and gradually revealing colorful and unique spirits. Charlene leads a group of girls at the very top of our class. In addition to excelling in English, she has gracefully accepted being our translator when we need a little extra help with explanations and bridging the gap between English and Swahili. Then there is Angel M. with her sly, inviting smile, who never wears the traditional dress or skirt but looks feisty and athletic in her bright red track suit. Kind and patient Angel S. is always there to assist her brother, who sometimes struggles in our class, but she looks like a movie star wearing my big round sunglasses!

Whatever their studious demeanor in class, we see quite a different side of their personalities on the soccer field. While Norm did some initial soccer drills with them and organized a game, they quickly

took over. They were as tough and strong as the boys. It was clear they knew their game, arguing vociferously, at the top of their lungs, over fouls and penalty kicks. Now, if we could only get them to speak up loudly like that in class! *Chris*

### ***Amosi***

Our students are generally very well behaved and motivated. We like them very much and believe the feelings are mutual. They generally try very hard to cope with a great deal of information in a difficult new language. They are, to my way of thinking, surprisingly successful.

Amosi is an active, funny boy with the most winning smile. He's a trickster and frequently gets into trouble, always turning around in his chair, joking, laughing and finding something humorous in everything. His name is always on the board (for getting into trouble), but never for anything mean or hurtful. For example, he received a warning today for trying to scare a girl with a spider! Something he vehemently denied...but, of course, unsuccessfully! He is a generally a good student who makes me look forward to teaching every day. *Norm*



### ***Charleen***

Charleen (the "Ch" is pronounced as in Charles) is our top student. This is unusual because our boys usually score higher than our girls. But this year six of the top ten students are girls. This is a real coup for girls as they must be getting more time to study than in the past, when their chores took priority over their school work. Charleen is already reading books such as *Stuart Little* and *Charlotte's Web*.

*Very exciting!*

Former students have not achieved this reading level until they have been in secondary school for two years. Charleen is a serious learner. With the first chapter book we gave



her, she came to me with a three-column list of the words she did not know and asked for help understanding them. She has a quiet humility about her even while she has aspirations to be an astronaut. This may not be feasible now, but possibly an African country could develop a space program between now and the time Charleen will finish at the university. I hope so!

*Nancy*

### ***Lake Nyasa***

In early November, we travelled to Lake Nyasa (also known as Lake Malawi) to see a totally different environment and way of life in Tanzania. Instead of the rolling farmland in the highlands of Manow, at its lower elevation the lake area feels even hotter and more tropical. The rains have not yet started, and I was struck by the drier and dustier landscape. Rather than the diversity of crops around Manow, we saw primarily crops of cassava and sweet

potatoes. And, of course, lake fish form a major part of people's diet.

We visited a poor village on the lake shore where the economy is largely based on a women's pottery collective. They create beautiful forms with a reddish glaze and etched designs of fish and flowers. The women share the proceeds of all pottery sales, no matter which ceramics are purchased. We also took our first "piki piki" (motorcycle) ride, three people to a bike. And after hiking through knee deep weeds and water, we were fortunate to get our first glimpse of hippos, including a baby and two or three adults. It was incredible to see their large heads explode from the water in a fountain of spray. We feel very blessed to have this opportunity to explore this beautiful land. *Chris*

***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 [wintersnl49@gmail.com](mailto:wintersnl49@gmail.com)