
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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September 29, 2024

The First Two Weeks

The first two weeks of travel, getting set up for classes and our first full week with the students here in Manow have gone as well as I could have expected. Thankful, for Mama Nancy's experience and many contacts whom have also paved the way for us.

The trip to Tanzania was long, even for a relatively frequent traveler, such as myself. I am most grateful for the overnight stays in Dubai and Dar es Salaam to start making the adjustments to the higher temperatures and extreme time changes. Arriving in Mbeya at night was an interesting experience and afforded the chance to see the community's nightlife activities along the main highway through town. The ride from Mbeya to Tukuyu and our final destination, Manow, was a great way to go from the plains up into the subequatorial highlands. The changing landscapes provided for some incredible views and scenery that was never ending.

Our arrival was blessed by a greeting by our house helper and her assistant along with a home cooked meal of stewed chicken, rice and a special greens dish that was amazing. We then had a week filled with unpacking, organizing the curriculum, preparing for the students' entrance exam, and numerous introductions to the many helpful folks here in the community.

When our first Monday morning of class rolled around, we were ready and so were our students! The first week of classes seemed to fly by, as the students quickly started picking up the early concepts to "build a house" of their new language skills on a firm foundation of the basics. They love to participate (most of the time!) and especially get enthusiastic about singing and competing for a treat.

The rhythm of our routine is quickly coming into focus as we prepare for Nancy to leave us and head home to Marty. Stacy, Beth and I are enjoying

getting to know one another better and even celebrated a special 70th birthday for Mama Beth! There is still much to be done, but I am excited to see our class grow in their English skills and to learn more about this wonderful, magical place.

Brian

Loving Reunions

Even before we arrived in Manow, the warm welcomes began. We met Martin Mwakaje and the driver (Lwimiko, father of a 2016 student) in Mbeya. When we reached Manow, our beloved house helper and pre-school teacher welcomed not just be, but all three of the new volunteers. These welcomes are embracing of new and old volunteers. I always feel like I am being wrapped in love.

This year more than most, former students have come to greet me and tell me how they are doing. Very many of them are in university programs, such as computer technology, English and Swahili education, medical studies, business and economics. John, the mischievous student from our 2016 class who could have been top in the class but was having too much fun, walked up to me at the market. He captured my heart, yet again. By telling me he is majoring in aquatic and environmental sciences.



These reunions have been joyful and reminiscing. All our former students seem to be filled with gratitude for their teachers and the course that launched them. I am also filled with gratitude for the opportunity to see their growth. What a blessing!!!

Nancy

Bunnies, Bunnies, Bunnies

We were privileged to meet the founder of Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary, Pastor Mwasamwaja, at his home, where he lives with his wife, Ruth. We also met his son, daughter-in-law, and grandson, Saimon, who is our student. Pastor Mwasamwaja attended seminary in Iowa at Wartburg Seminary in the 1960s and remembers his time in the United States fondly, especially Kentucky Fried Chicken and Kool Aid! He is now 84 and actively interested in life.



Saimon (Simon), his grandson, is an excellent addition our class. He listens attentively, often raises his hand to answer questions, and is always ready to help. Saimon showed us his rabbit hutch in back of the house, where he proudly tends 34 rabbits- a meat

source for his family. Saimon is tender-hearted and does not like the slaughter process, according to his father. We are grateful families such as Saimon's, who value this learning opportunity and make the most of it. *Beth*

Market Day

Our second Saturday here was market day, so in the morning we descended a mile and a half through hilly equatorial farmland, arriving at 9 am. Vendors were just opening their stalls, offering a variety of fresh produce, housewares, fabrics, and sundries. Further into town are small shops such as pharmacies, hair salons, Internet cafes, stationary stores and electronic supplies. We had a considerable shopping list, so we began negotiating and buying bags of tomatoes, onions, garlic, rice, etc. at various stalls with the translation help of Mama Baraka, the tomato vendor. After an hour, our backpacks were bulging, so we rested with a cool beverage at Bupe's stall. She is centrally located in the market which allowed some of us to branch out for other items of interest before heading home either on foot or riding a *piki piki* (motorcycle).



Mama Baraka (in red)

The four of us are objects of considerable attention and curiosity. People openly stare but are quick to respond when we greet them in the local tribal language, Kinyakusa: *Ugonili* (How are you?), *Ndaga* (Fine). I hope to absorb this kind hospitality and practice it when I return home. It is a profound lesson in welcoming the stranger, and perhaps my strongest first impression of Tanzania. *Beth*

Reflections from My First Week with Tanzania Teaching Foundation 27 September 2024

Volunteering with Tanzania Teaching Foundation (TTF) has been an inspiring experience from day one. My first week has been filled with laughter and stories from teaching the youngest members of the TTF community but the reunions with former students who have journeyed far since their time in the program has warmed my heart.

I had the pleasure of meeting Catherine and Tumpe from the Class of 2015, and Rehema, Shangwe, and Dorice from the Class of 2016, along with Anna ('15), Robert ('15), and Omega ('18). These talented young people, now in their twenties, are pursuing degrees across Tanzania—from Mbeya to Dodoma to Dar es Salaam. They're studying to become accountants, engineers, and teachers, dedicating their lives to professions that will help build a brighter future for their communities.

The one common thread connecting all of them is their admiration and gratitude for Mama Nancy and the TTF program. As the former students reminisced, it was clear how transformative their experiences were. They recalled entering the program with little to no knowledge of the English language, facing a daunting challenge of being immersed in English. Yet, through the support and dedication of the TTF team, they gained the skills and confidence needed to excel in secondary school and, eventually, university.

Their stories are not just testimonies of personal success but also affirmations of the profound impact that education can have on individuals and communities. Each of these students spoke passionately about how TTF opened doors for them, empowering them to dream big and achieve even more.



Rehema, Brian, Shangwe, and Doris

Hearing their experiences was a powerful reminder of why you support us to do this work. It's not just about teaching English; it's about creating opportunities, building confidence, and shaping futures. I'm truly honored to be a part of this journey and can't wait to see what these remarkable young people will accomplish next.

As I look forward to the weeks ahead, I'm filled with excitement for the new connections to be made and the stories yet to be written. The spirit of resilience and hope that these students embody is something I will carry with me always, reminding me of the transformative power of education and the unwavering support of a dedicated community like TTF.

Stacy

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