
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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State of the Program

One of our former volunteers suggested that I describe where we have been and what we have accomplished over the past 6 years. This may be helpful for those of you who only receive our fall/winter newsletters each year. The Tanzania Teaching Foundation (TTF) began as a mission of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Olympia, Washington. The Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals, families and communities in Tanzania through targeted education programs. Since 2009, members of the church have teamed with individuals from Olympia and beyond to provide support and funding for our 10-week intensive English course (Pre-Form 1 English) offered to 40 Tanzanian students who are about to enter secondary school. Students come from approximately a 6 mile radius around the small village of Manow in the south central highlands of Tanzania.

We have had several significant milestones *since* we took our first 40 students in 2009.

- We have improved the English proficiency for more than 250 students, most of whom went on to secondary school, which is taught in English. We have received good reports from Tanzanian teachers that students from our classes have high English proficiency which helps in their classes.
- In 2013, we raised the money, and built two classrooms for our use while we are teaching Pre-From 1 English each year. The building serves as a community center for the 9 months we are not there.
- A number of this year's Pre-Form 1 English students were more qualified than any of our previous students, an indication that the community is recognizing the importance of education.
- To assess our potential to expand the number of students we serve this year, we added a second mini-class of 12 students at a community center about 2 miles from Manow.
- Students who have completed our program are now being exempted from the entrance exam at Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary (MLJS is our sponsoring secondary school). This is a true measure of success recognizing that our students are better prepared for secondary school than most of students who attend the school.
- We are beginning to survey our former students to assess how they have performed in secondary school. The Pre-From 1 class of 2009 graduated from secondary school and learned the results of their national exams in May of this year. At least five of them have begun Form 5 (junior college).
- We have begun to find sponsors for our scholarship winners. TTF provides a one-year scholarship to MLJS to the one boy and one girl who perform the best in the Pre-Form 1 English class each year. In the past, several students have turned down the scholarship because it has not extended for the full 4 years. In early 2015, two sponsors will begin supporting the 2013 graduates as they complete Forms 2 through 4 (sophomore through senior years). Three other sponsors will begin supporting this year's scholarship winners in early 2016. We will continue to recruit sponsors for our future scholarship winners.
- Because we have continued to grow and expand the program, we felt the need to be able to apply for grant funding, which requires status as a non-profit organization. We have formed a board of directors and will submit our application for status as 501(3)(c) by the end of this year or early 2015.
- Finally, each of our volunteers has felt the incredibly warm support in the Manow community. We believe that our Manow colleagues also benefit from our exchange.

All of this work has been accomplished thanks to each and every one of our supporters. This work would not be possible without your financial and emotional support. And to each of you I say Asante sana (thank you very much).

Nor would this program be possible without the 13 volunteers who have undertaken the three-months of an intense teaching schedule, requiring great patience, resourcefulness, energy, and a slight theatrical streak. They teach under what most Americans would consider 1940s technology (blackboards with dusty chalk and erasers). They often come home at the end of the day to no running water and/or no electricity. Yet somehow they have each been enriched by their service.

Nashakuru sana (I am deeply grateful) to all of you for the gifts you have brought to the program.

Nancy

Last Thoughts on Manow

Big doin's at the church today. Lots of hollerin' and drumming this morning. The church was alive with some sort of chant-like singing all through the night. Looking toward the church at 7:30 a.m. I see the group of about eight women who take advantage of the one lone spigot outside the church near our school to do their laundry. Last week that spigot and all our homes ran dry and we had no water for three days. That is not uncommon here.

You may have gathered that these people don't have a lot of money. Our students come to school often in the same clothes they've worn for five or more days. Their shoes are tattered, and more often than not they wear some form of cheap flip flops, no matter the weather. Often the flip flops have broken straps.

We hounded the students for days about bringing a new pencil to school, as they were working with just two inches of pencil and the eraser had long ago disintegrated. The majority of kids never brought a new pencil so we dipped into the budget and bought more from the *duka* (shop) down the hill. The pencils had a picture of President Obama on them, by the way. Obama's approval rating is extremely high in Africa!

I know the coming week will be hard for me as we say goodbye to the children who have come faithfully to school every day for ten weeks, often walking several miles to get here and back. I'll miss Lwuaga who made me laugh all the time, and Reila who kept on me one day with SMILE SMILE SMILE when I was feeling blue. And there's Justin with his incredible smile, and Elinisia who was a big tattle-tale, and Crizantius who reminded us of Kramer on Seinfeld., I will miss them all. I hope we've made their lives just a little better. Thank you to all the donors who made this possible. I will be leaving Manow with much more than I brought.

Jani

Final Reflections

It's very strange to be writing my final thoughts about this country and the people of Tanzania. It seems like a long time ago that I first traveled across an ocean and three continents to get to a small village in an area that is "Shangri La" to its locals. I will try to put my final reflections on this strange and yet, now familiar place. Strange because the language, customs, and traditions that I have encountered are so different from our own. Familiar now because the people have such strong family and neighbor ties and true feelings of graciousness and giving without asking for anything in return.

What I have learned is that more is truly not important, but feeling happy that you exist is the most important thing. To greet anyone and everyone with smiles and heartfelt feelings of acknowledgement; to have the company of friends, family, and strangers at every important event; and to treat all as though they were your family is quite remarkable. But in this small seemingly unimportant part of the world it is a way of life. When you are born people come to visit, help, and be by your side. When you die, the church bells ring, telling the community it is time. And even if they didn't know you, they drop everything and come to be at your side again. To have no one must be very lonely. **That** would be considered adversity. And yet through all the hardships and tedious tasks of their everyday living there is song and dance that abounds.

The other day at the market in Lwangwa I stated that it reminded me of an old west town with its ramshackled buildings and dusty main street. On the other hand after you see all the color, movement, and activity during the market day you realize again, this is what the country is and to try to change it would be like taking a painting by Monet and altering it. This painting before my eyes is perfect the way it is. For this is the real Africa. Its varied terrain foreign and familiar, its villages and cities teeming with activity, its sparsely populated regions.

For three months I have lived within this culture, and for three months I have seen the many ways of existence these resourceful people use to live. The only true way to experience Africa is to be here -- not just in the tourist areas, but places where the real Africa is, off the beaten path, in an obscure village with only a rutted dirt road to travel on. This little village of Manow and its people that I have come to think of as always being a part of me, this is where you'll find the real Africa, the real Tanzanian people, the real culture. Here you will find that happy, generous, welcoming, friendly, and giving people.

There are many other things I could probably say, but my final reflection is this, I am very happy that I came. In so many ways I have learned the things that I had forgotten -- little pleasures, heart felt greetings, sharing, giving with no expectations of anything in return, and most of all that life is what is most important no matter how tedious your existence may feel. It is life that you should always be happy for. In that way you will always *ugonili* everyone with a smile and treat them as one your extended family, a precious part of all existence.

Ernie

Want to Get Involved?

If you would like to get involved in TTF, I can get you plugged in. If you would like to give the gift of education. During this holiday season, please make your tax-deductible donations to GDLC-TTF and send them to me. Send an email to me at wintersnl@comcast.net and I can help you with the logistics.

Nancy