
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

Jani Gilbert and Nancy Winters

October 2016

Our Meeting at Lake Nyasa

We crashed and bumped down the dusty, rocky, rutted road to Matema, the village at Lake Nyasa. We were on our way to a Partnership meeting of Tanzanian, German, Swedish and American Lutheran leaders who were there to discuss each country's role in the Tanzanian education, water system, and hospital projects.

We passed by the Livingston Mountains, of "Doctor Livingston, I presume" fame, and arrived at the biggest freshwater lake I've ever seen. Look it up on a map and you'll see what I mean. Lake Nyasa, or Lake Malawi as it's known in the neighboring country of Malawi, is home to 150 species of cyprinid fish that are not found anywhere else in the world.

The gathering was full of wonderful accents and valuable networking, critical when these people are spread all over this enormous globe. For example, Martin Mwakage, our constant go-to person in Manow, spoke about the need for solar panels for the computer lab at Manow Lutheran Junior Seminary because they never have enough electricity. At the tea break, a German pastor approached Martin about a possible source of financing for the solar panels.

Nancy spoke about the Pre-Form One English program that we teach, initiating international interest in how it all came to be. As you know, Nancy founded the program in 2008.

After the morning session, I sat in a chair on the sand in front of our room. Suddenly a native family arrived and everyone wanted a picture of me, the wazungu, with each and every member of the family. Wazungu is a Swahili noun for white people. Sometimes it brushes up against being derogatory, but it's not quite there. So I brush up against being offended, but I'm not quite there.

Local people did their bathing and washed their clothes in the lake but it was still clear and swimmable, that is until a German man told me the lake had little worms that bore into your skin and make you very sick a week or two later. Nancy later said that the parasites are not in this area. We had travelled way down in elevation too, making malaria-type mosquitos more prevalent. Malaria waits a couple weeks before showing itself too, so we are waiting for two weeks to go by when we will be in the clear.

Jani

Half Way Point

We just completed our fifth week of the 10-week course. The students are now writing 9-word sentences in past, present, or future tense. We think they have command of more or less a 900-word vocabulary, although most of the sentences include going to the market, to school or church and eating ugali and beans. We have now prohibited the use of the phrase "every day" from their sentences. Here are some example sentences. "I dropped a pink table and yellow chair last week." "My mother is writing a new sentence now." "I dropped a new watermelon and carrot."

Next week we begin our sustainable farming unit which culminates with a plan for planting a one acre farm with local food and forage crops (some of which are nitrogen fixers) that can feed a family of four. The students will be able to identify some of the local forage plants in English, Swahili, and Nyakusa. It is likely that all these students will do some farming in their lives. The unit is designed to help them farm using sustainable practices that will preserve the soil, water, and air quality for generations to come.

In general the students are progressing very well despite the intensity of the course. Last week when writing thank you letters to sponsors, some of them mentioned that they were thankful for the daily quizzes and tests. In my wildest fantasy I could not imagine an American teenager saying that they were thankful for tests. *Nancy*



Healthy Living Unit Skit – Cosmas demonstrating teeth brushing skills during

Preaching near Mbambo

When Jani and I went to the Partnership meeting at Matema, I was informed late Friday afternoon that I would be preaching Sunday morning to a small congregation outside of Mbambo (an hour and a half drive from the meeting). My first impulse was to freak out. But then I remembered I had my previous year's sustainability sermon on the computer. So I could chill until Sunday morning.

We arrived at the church in the midst of a farming community about a half hour before the service started. My translators and I were served tea, eggs, and mandazi before being ushered into the service. The younger of the choirs, turned on the CD player and lip-synced to their own CD. The choir in their various primary colored kangas (sarongs), shirts and ties, danced while "singing." I totally appreciated the choir director with his red satin shirt, gray slacks, gray and white pinpoint poka dot tie, dazzling white shoes and matching red socks. From my front row seat, I decided that his moves put Mick Jagger to shame.

At the mid-point of the service when both offerings had been made, my translator and I were

called forward. I spoke about the importance of picking up litter and not burning the plastic, planting more trees than a family cuts down for cooking and charcoal in a year – two themes currently being promoted by the country's president. I spoke of the dangers of bush burning, and specific practices they could implement to prevent soil erosion. The sermon was well received and several people even asked specific questions afterwards! They wondered how they would get the tree stumps out of the ground without burning them. I suggested a collaborative approach with other farmers to manually remove them. *Nancy*

Jani

Jani is the perfect person to enhance community relations between the people of Manow and our volunteers. She has a particularly ingratiating smile and way of greeting people in Nyakusa that has the effect of instantaneously winning their hearts. If you know Jani, you will understand. She takes the time to greet each child, adult, baby and even the stray dog. Her sweet demeanor, smile, and efforts to speak both Nyakusa and Swaili open people to broad smiles and appreciative giggles from the kids. She has been a two-time asset to the program and I am thankful. *Nancy*

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you. It keeps us in touch with life in the US. Please limit the size of the email as the system is still very slow here and crashes easily. Jani's email address is janigilbert1@gmail.com. My correct email is wintersnl@comcast.net