
TANZANIA CONNECTIONS

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The Final Exam

The last week of class is spent reviewing all the materials we have covered in preparation of our four-hour comprehensive exam. We administer each one-hour section of the exam separately with outdoor breaks between each section.

This year the students thought that the exam was not so difficult. And, in fact, the average was about 7% higher than the previous year. So they really must have studied. Part I tests their listening and reading comprehension, and their ability to write a coherent story.

I want to share the most creative of the stories, which was written by Kefa, a very sweet, albeit quiet, fellow. The instructions were "Write a story about the animal in the picture on the board (a bird). Your story must be 5 sentences or more. You must use past tense ONLY. You will be graded on whether your sentences are correct AND on your creativity."

Kefa wrote, "Eagle is a bird. Eagle liked to ate snakes and dead animals. One day eagle went to the forest. Eagle flew in the air and too a snake from the ground. Eagle is very sad because the snake died after ten days and smelled bad. Eagle cried and cried and said today is not good to me."

Creativity is not often recognized within the Tanzanian education system. Kefa got all ten points for creativity.

Nancy

Christmas Carols

This year, more than previous years, I was aware that the Christmas season would be in full swing when we arrived back in the U.S. To lessen my nostalgia, Jani and I sang some Christmas carols with Norman, one of the Form 2 students we are supporting through secondary school at Manow. He had stopped in to say

goodbye as school was closing. Norman, Jani, and I sang Joy to the World, Silent Night, and What Child is This, while eating the peanut butter cookies Jani had made. Norman, fully in the Christmas spirit, "snarfed" the cookies right down. It was really fun to share the melodies of Christmas with him.

The church choir also came over for cookies, banana bread, and soda just before we left. Among other things, I wanted to show them how much I appreciated their thoughtful visit in October after my mother passed away. They came to lovingly share the sorrow and to say "*pole sana*" (we're sorry for your loss).

Three of the choir members came at the appointed time (this is atypical for Tanzanian culture). I captured them on video as they sang Silent Night in both Swahili and Nyakusa (the local tribal language). The carol united us beyond our language barriers.

As the others arrived we shared the treats. I had printed the words to Joy to the World (all four verses) for all of us to sing. After several practice rounds, they sang in perfect harmony. Mwaikenda thought it would be a good idea to really practice so the choir could sing the carol in English in church on Sunday. We sang until I was completely hoarse – all four verses at least 10 times. We decided to practice again at our weekly rehearsals. But Tuesday there was a funeral and Thursday and Friday it rained and we normally rehearse outdoors. So we did not sing it the following Sunday. Maybe next year...?

Nancy

Coming Home

It's been twice now that I've come home from Tanzania to a brightly decorated Christmas world here in Washington. I am in Spokane and returned to a white Christmas to boot! But I am uneasy because of everything I either have or have access to. At the same time, I realize that I am more comfortable at home and feel a small amount of guilt over that too.

The children we taught are not starving, they are not sick, and they appear to be happy much of the time, although we can't really talk to them in unbroken Swahili or the local tribal language. But they had no food in the morning before school. Their first meal was when we served them mandazi, milky tea, and chapatti at about 10 a.m.

While our students were not sick, if they were to become sick, little timely medical help was available. Because they didn't have cars, travel to the hospital 10 kilometers away simply might not happen.

While the children were fully clothed, their clothing was from what other people in the world didn't want. Shipments of used clothing come into different African countries from Europe and the U.S. Girls often came to school in discarded formal wear. They played soccer ("football") in torn cocktail dresses. The boys' shirts almost always advertised a Western product of some kind. The clothes they wore, they wore every day for the whole week.

In many ways, the kids were just like ours. They played and joked like any American child would. They were competitive, shy and stuck close to their friends. They were silly, they pouted, and some of their antics sent them to stand with their noses against the wall. They cheered loudly at our little football games. Girls avoided boys like they were spider guts and yet they flirted just a bit.

But they are different from our kids too. Mostly because they don't have much. They don't have books. They can't choose what to wear. They don't have computers and electronic games and only a few families have

TVs. They have many chores at home and on the small subsistence farms, leaving little time for study or homework.

But what they have that we don't are impossibly close families, a tight knit village of loving extended family, friends and involved church and community leaders. Everybody knows everybody's names - even mine.

As I stood in the pouring rain watching the boys play their football rivals in a big open field just before the session ended, at least eight boys and girls joined me under my umbrella. I thought I'd just burst with all the affection and closeness I felt with those kids. Until they unknowingly nudged me out into the rain. Oh well. I miss them so much and I admire so much all that they do, even without rooms, closets and storage lockers full of expensive stuff.

Jani

Send email!!

We would love to hear from you about how things are going for you, and how you liked the newsletters this year. If the newsletters inspired you to think about teaching in the program, please let me know. My email is wintersnl@comcast.net