

Greetings from Kenya!

12/22/24

Since moving day (Nov. 22), I have settled in and found space in my small house to store clothing, books, yarn, instruments, school supplies, cooking ware, and food. This was a challenge because the house has no closets, kitchen cabinets, or pantry, only a few narrow shelves attached high on the walls. Nevertheless it's a good house and I am happy to be here in Lirhandu (one of the best PC sites in Kenya, I am told) where people are so friendly, the climate is ideal (now that the rainy season has almost ended), and the natural surroundings are beautiful. With this letter I am sending pictures of my school campus, which includes my little row house. A highlight of my short time here was a visit from the PC Country Director, herself a former volunteer, who brought me several pieces of her home-made pottery which I use every day.

My time over the last four weeks has been spent as follows: Taking 3-4 Kiswahili lessons/week (plus homework) with my tutor Patrick Mulamula, followed by chai (tea, but really a full meal) prepared by his wife Rasoa; Working through math problems from past national exams – quite difficult and involving topics not covered in the U.S; Keeping myself fed and watered. This last item requires shopping at the nearest market or local vegetable stands 2-3 times/week and cooking on a propane stove. Without refrigeration, milk and cooked food has to be consumed in two days or less, giving new significance to the concepts of “manna” and “daily bread.” Water must be boiled or filtered and chlorinated before it is drinkable. Other household chores such as doing laundry are labor-intensive – all clothes are washed and rinsed in basins and buckets. While school does not start until Jan.6, my days are fully occupied!

New developments here include getting a Buffalo Bike (read about them online) and opening my own P.O. box. The bicycle saves me time riding to the market (1.5 km) and Kakamega city (7 km). My local mailing address is P.O. Box 1246-50100, Kakamega, KENYA. Of course any letters you send will be greatly appreciated, with just two bits of advice: Don't pay extra for quick delivery – the delay is on this end and paying extra to the USPS will not help. And second, anything bigger than a letter should be labeled on the outside “for personal use only” because smuggling goods to sell here is a problem.

Since arriving I have attended Friends (Quaker) Village Church, where the hymns are good and the services last only two hours. The congregation has given me a warm welcome. I went to a wedding in a nearby village that lasted 3 hours and the outdoor reception over 5 hours, complete with a full meal, dancing, gift-giving, and cake cutting – quite an experience. The choir at the wedding (Roman Catholic) was outstanding, as good as any choral group I have ever heard anywhere.

Finally, about the book project: One of my contacts has sent me links to international organizations that collect appropriate books and ship a full container overseas. The cost is high but not prohibitive. Thus the project will probably have two parts: one funded by donations (more about this later) and a smaller component in which books are collected by my friends and transported by travelers. For now, donated books can be dropped off (in a box or bag under one of the sheltered doorways) at Grace Lutheran Church on Buchanan Blvd. in Durham, near East Campus. From out of town, please send books (by media mail – it's cheap!) to Nick Register, 2906 Montgomery St, Durham NC 27705. Thank you!

And thanks to all who have sent news from home, as well as encouragement and kind words. Now I wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, or joyful holiday of whatever flavor you like.

Much love,  
Marie/Minnie, etc.



Friends School, assembly area



Friends School, Lirhanda



My Front Porch



Friends School, 2nd wing