December 27, 2025

Greetings from Kenya!

This last month of 2025 has been pleasant, peaceful, and productive for me, and I hope for you too. The first week, my cohort of PCVs gathered in Kisumu for Mid-service Training. Meetings were again held at Tom Mboya College, bringing back memories of our first week together in September of 2024. We discussed our successes and failures, special projects, home repair, health & safety, and Kenyan politics. The second language proficiency interview revealed that my Kiswahili skills have improved a bit.

My next task was a thorough house-cleaning, followed by neglected household chores, and finally time spent examining and reading many of the books y'all donated. For me it was an early Christmas, to read young adult novels, science books, and especially the *Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. Meanwhile our school "fundis" (craftsmen) were busy making improvements to my office, such as installing a ceiling (to keep out wasps), constructing a large bookshelf, and repainting. The office will now double as the Lirhanda Little Library, a trial project anticipating our larger library to come. Students will be allowed to check out one book per week, provided they follow the guidelines. I hope they will learn to love reading as they practice taking care of borrowed books and returning them on time. It's been fun, pretending to be a librarian as I classify and shelve books and establish our lending policy.

Interspersed with library preparations, I spent time doing a bit of leisurely study of math and Kiswahili. For one of my language lessons, I read stories from picture books (some in English and some in Kiswahili) to about a dozen kids living in my tutor's family compound. Also I made several shopping trips to Kakamega for food and school supplies that are not available in my local market town. The weekend before Christmas I traveled north to Kitale, to visit three American "age-mates" (in their 60s and 70s) doing amazing work for Catholic Relief Services. It was nice talking with older folks – my fellow PCVs are wonderful, but most of them are young enough to be my grandchildren! The lodge in Kitale where my friends stay has a professional chef, so the food was outstanding. Also they have an overflowing library and wanted to give away books, and I brought back a shopping bag full of good literature. Finally I should report that my Christmas dinner was a Kenyan feast at the home of my Kiswahili tutor, topped off with dark chocolate bars from Whole Foods (my small contribution).

On Sunday I will travel again to Kisumu to meet my son John who will be visiting for a little over a week. Next month you'll hear all about it. The photographs this month feature more animals from the Masai Mara Reserve (which John and I will also tour).

Sending much love and wishing you a happy New Year,
M/M







