

Dear Friends and Family,

This letter comes to you before my departure to Kenya, scheduled for September 1st. I am writing now for several reasons. First, I want to thank you all for your support, delivered in various ways over the last months: letters of recommendation, tech support (of which I needed lots! – from two people in particular), a place to stay after leaving my house, shared experiences of Peace Corps service, offers of assistance, and many words of encouragement to help me prepare for this daunting venture. For those so inclined, please say a prayer for me, that the Lord will give me the courage, strength, and patience to persevere through unknown challenges over the next 27 months.

Next I want to give permission to share these letters with anyone who is interested. The subject matter will be descriptive of my work, interactions with Kenyan people and American volunteers, travel in Kenya and elsewhere, and aspects of the local geography and culture. I hope to include photographs.

Another reason for writing early is to be sure that all of you really want to be on this mailing list. If any of your names were included by mistake, please say so! (No hard feelings.) In any case, I would be happy to hear from you with news from Durham, or wherever you live.

Finally, I will describe to you briefly what I have been doing for the last ten months, since receiving the invitation to serve in Kenya. Getting legal and medical clearance to qualify was a lengthy process – fingerprints, FBI background check, questionnaires, blood tests, scans, check-ups, and vaccinations. After that the fun began: working through Swahili lessons on Duolingo, taking pre-departure courses on the Peace Corps learning website, participating in Zoom calls with other volunteers and staff, and reading books by Kenyan authors. It has been quite an education for me. Concurrently with all of this has been the time-consuming activity of closing up my house, which involved shedding about half my books and bookcases, giving away a roomful of furniture, sorting through papers, and packing up the stuff I'm keeping.

The next letter will, I hope, originate in Kenya. Until then, kwa heri (goodbye).

Amani (peace),

M. (which might stand for Marie, Minnie, Mother, grandMa, or Math teacher – take your pick!)

P.S. The attached photograph was taken just after I moved out of my house on Hull Avenue.

