



Newsletter of Rev. Vance and Linda Becker at Matongo, Kenya

April 2020

New Neighbors and No Contact

Just as for the rest of the world, much has changed since our last newsletter only a few weeks ago, mostly due to the Corona virus.

In our last exciting episode, we were hoping to go to an all-staff retreat in Kenya. Then, just in case borders closed, we were to quickly just move there. Hours later, it was already too late for that and so we are satisfied to stay here in Tanzania for now.

Changes are being made to cut off outside contacts in case the virus comes here (or maybe already has). There are no more Saturday trips to town and the Swahili teachers were stopped from coming.

Meanwhile, another student here was ordered back to the States and a boarder from South Africa went home. They are replaced by new neighbors taking refuge here, two families, each with three young children. One is a chaplain from a school that shut down and the other ran the Nema Craft café and handicapped ministry in Iringa (where we had gone to get internet connection), which also closed. Members of the Moyer family, who run the camp and live close by, have also had family members move in with them. We have met to plan steps

to isolate ourselves as a community, although the four of us, Beckers and Steeles, are also keeping our distance from the newcomers for two weeks.

The dirt road leading to the camp is gated off. The other side is blocked by the river, still at flood stage, often



too high to even use the zip line.

A few of the staff will also move in, while others are let go so we will do our own cleaning and laundry. The few who must go on essential errands will shower and change as they return. Food and other supplies will be left at the gate. A local farmer who had supplied hotels until they closed will provide our vegetables. We have our own water and power supply.

Because of natural isolation and the steps being taken, we are more safe here than almost anywhere else. We have our own power and water supply, a nurse, and an assortment of other skills. It is a cross between Anne Frank's attic and Gilligan's Island, while surrounded by acres of wooded hills.

Please pray for us, praising God for

His unfailing love, thanking Him for His many gifts and servants, thanking Him for His constant presence and protection, and asking Him to give us opportunities to share our faith and do it well.

Blest Be the Ties That Bind

Like many others, we now have new devotional routines, beside our usual habits. Our East Africa team now meets online for devotions each morning. We also join online for the Sunday service conducted by those serving in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



Vance has been asked to organize a rotation among those with us here who are ministers to do a weekly devotion for our group. It is recognized that in such groups Satan loves to sneak in and cause conflicts. (See the "Bible Reflection.") But God put us in this place at this time for a reason.

Please pray for us, praising God for His true and living Word,

thanking Him for His priceless gift of salvation, and asking Him to help us grow in faith, hope and love.



An aqueduct from the river supplies water for our bathrooms

Swahili Homeschool

Our teachers no longer come to us, but we are doing our best to continue classes “online.” There are always many technology problems here but, with patience and persistence, we keep trying different things. We depend on cell phones to get internet but now have access to an antenna. WhatsApp often gets through when nothing else can and we use email when possible. Otherwise, we have some books and things we can do on our own. Walter says, “semper gumby,” stay flexible.

Please pray for us, praising God for His wisdom and power to provide, thanking Him for new learning experiences, and asking Him to help us learn Swahili well and to keep us mentally sharp.

Bible reflection

I have heard that when lions hunt, the male will stalk and roar, but that is not the real danger. If the frightened animals run, they are ambushed by the female, hiding on the other side, waiting to pounce.

This is like what happened to Peter when he was frightened by the simple questions of a servant girl into denying that he even knew the one protecting him, much to his despair.

The Devil would love to do this to us, to so frighten us with the Corona virus and frustrate us with shut-down difficulties that we back into the trap of angry relationships with others, envy, complaining, selfishness, etc.. Whenever you find yourself fearing anything more than God, look behind you for an attack on your eternal spiritual life more dangerous than any physical threat.

Fortunately, our supply line in this battle, and the victory itself is provided by God. It is Jesus’ undeserved, unlimited forgiveness, daily renewal in our baptisms, His living word of law and gospel, unfailing answers to prayer and the constant work of the Holy Spirit.

People wonder...

Are there other churches doing mission work there as well?

(This question comes from a reader. Thank you.) Yes, there are many others.

The ELCA has partners here and the Wisconsin Synod is exploring work here as well. The LCMS auxiliary, Lutheran Heritage Foundation is at work here, as well as independent Lutheran groups not in cooperation with us.

Since this was a former British colony, it is no surprise Anglicans are here. Nema Craft, for example, (see the article on new neighbors) is their project. There is a Roman Catholic presence and some others.

The largest Christian type in most of Africa is Pentecostal. Many promote a “miracles, health and wealth” gospel. There are also many evangelicals and others independent of any particular denomination, both associated with groups in the US and local. They may work with each other in a rather fluid way based on minimal agreement in teachings.

Seventh Day Adventism is very common. Of course, you can expect the Mormons and other cults to be here as well, but they don’t seem that noticeable.

If you wonder about a question, email vance.becker@lcms.org

Please pray for us, praising God for His knowledge of all the future holds for us, thanking Him for all those who work to share the Gospel, and asking Him to give us health, endurance, and protection to us and all those in this area.

Swahili sample

One way I try to learn Swahili vocabulary, especially lists of things, is to make them into a song. Here is a song to the tune of “The Makarini.” (Remember that one?)
Cheza chini, juu, katikati, mashariki.
Hiki ni kushuku na kulia, kaskazini.
Sasa kwa mbele na nyuma,
magharibi; kwa pembeni na kusini.

Like the Makarini, it is actually a dance. Here is what it means:
“Dance down, up, middle, east. Here is left, right, north. Now forward and backward west; side to side and south.” Try it!

If you get this newsletter in print but could get it by email instead, it could save funds for our ministry.

Email us with your name and the mailing address now receiving it.

Connect with us.

Email us at vance.becker@lcms.org & linda.becker@lcmsintl.org

Help expand our network by liking [vance.becker.lcms](https://www.facebook.com/vance.becker.lcms) on facebook and sharing it and this newsletter with friends. Let us know about yourself and prayer requests. We will pray for you too.

Financial support

All our funding comes through the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, not just an office in St. Louis but the people and congregations. We are grateful for many generous people, for yearly & monthly gifts, and also single gifts.

A monthly or yearly gift is ideal but a start-up gift is also very helpful.

- Checks written to LCMS with Becker/Kenya in the memo can be mailed to: LCMS, P.O. Box 6861, St. Louis, MO 63166-6861 or Mission Central, 40718 Highway E16, Mapleton, IA 51034-7105 (missioncentral.us),
- Give on-line at www.lcms.org/givenow/becker
- or missioncentral.us/becker
- Give by phone at 888-843-5267.

Please pray for us, praising God for daily providing out of Fatherly, goodness and mercy, thanking Him for those who are able to give generously, and asking Him to keep providing funds for this work.