



Newsletter of Rev. Vance and Linda Becker at Matongo, Kenya January 2021

New Year, New Semester

Students are starting to arrive for the new semester that will start Monday. Vance is looking forward to the four classes he will teach, Homiletics (preaching), Pastoral Ministry and Counseling, Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord) and General Epistles (James – Jude).

There were not textbooks here for these classes, but he was able to get some brought over from the U.S. and is printing materials for others. Learning from experience, he has prepared a simplified English version of parts of the Book of Concord.

Linda will work more with chapel music and will teach a new Bible study for Diaconess students.

We both look forward to seeing returning students and new ones.

Please pray for us, praising God for His eternal truth, thanking Him for students who are eager to learn, and asking Him to help us and all the students to have the resources, wisdom, etc. to do our work well.

Our “Christmas Letter”

This is about the time that Vance usually gets around to writing an annual Christmas letter, or, more



This has been a year of big changes. We abandoned heavy winter coats as we left the upper Midwest and arrived in Kenya on Jan. 15. After a week at the main office in Nairobi, we went to Iringa, Tanzania, to study Swahili at a rural camp. While we were there, Covid 19 appeared. We finished classes with our teachers on the phone

and then, because of border closures, we stayed there until late August.

Meanwhile, our second grandson was born, the first for our son and his wife. Thanks to



the internet, we may have seen as much of him as Covid would have allowed in the U.S., including his baptism and now crawling. The lockdown happened just in time for our son

often, “Epiphany Epistle” for family and friends. Well, this is it.

to work from home ever since the birth.

Also, this summer, our daughter and family moved from Oklahoma, where her husband taught at a university, to one in Mississippi which fortunately already did some online teaching. Their son is now a kindergartener in a Lutheran school and their daughter is starting to talk.



In August, we traveled across Tanzania into Kenya, to our home at

Matongo Lutheran Theological College. We arrived in time to celebrated Vance’s 65th birthday. It is in a beautiful rural spot in the hills between the cities of Kisumu, on Lake Victoria, and



Kericho, a center of the tea growing area. We were able to visit wildlife parks in both Tanzania and Kenya.

We set up housekeeping in a recently built home on campus. Linda now has gardens growing and has adapted to how things are done here, with unpredictable power, water and internet.



Beginning at the end of October, Vance taught two classes, finishing the semester that began last January but was suspended in March. He spent December preparing for the next semester.

Linda has also picked up duties, including playing keyboard for chapel and being “Matron” of the deaconess students.

Meanwhile, it has been interesting to visit nearby rural churches where Vance has been invited to preach. It is always an all-day affair with great hospitality and often “adventurous” roads.

We are very happy here and staying healthy. In this year of big changes, our changeless God has been brought us through them all.

We all miss being with family and friends with the way things are this year but know that Jesus is always with us. This is why he was born, to be our Immanuel. Epiphany reminds us He is the Savior of all nations, including those where we live and serve. We look forward to when we are all gathered together again with Him in heaven.

Please pray for us, praising God for another year of His grace, thanking Him for protecting and providing for us and asking Him to keep us and our family healthy and growing.

People wonder...

How do people celebrate Christmas and New Year's there?

We have learned just a bit about this. We have not seen any signs of decorations at homes or special events, but people do say they enjoy Christmas and have mentioned presents. Malls in big cities are decorated with Santa displays and lights. Of course, there is no snow or any of the traditions that go with that.

Advent services are not a thing here because people don't go out at night. What is common in December is “parish synods.” People from several congregations come together for a long weekend of teaching by

visiting pastors and choirs singing. Vance taught at one nearby.

We were in Nairobi for Christmas itself. The Lutheran cathedral church there was well attended on Christmas Day. It had a lighted tree in the sanctuary

It seems common to have a big service on New Year's Day. The bell at the church here rang at 5 am and again at 5:30. Yes, that is not a misprint: 5 am. We weren't ready.

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

Please pray for us, praising God for comfort and joy, thanking Him for another year of grace and asking Him lead everyone to rejoice in their savior.

Bible reflection

In order to grow a hedge between our house and the road, sticks cut from other bushes were cut, stuck into the ground and left to grow. Because of the constant sun and frequent rain here, about a third of them have taken root and sprouted new leaves.

Jesus told parables about how God's word is like seed that is planted and grows, not because of anything we do. Another parable tells how some that is planted grows while in another place it does not.

We are stuck by God into the places where we are in order to be part of how His church grows. We cannot take credit for the growth, it all depends on Him, and because of His abundant blessings, it happens.

Please pray for us, praising God for His living and powerful word, thanking Him for bringing many to faith and asking Him to help us keep growing and bearing fruit.

Swahili sample

As they would say here,
Salaam njema ya Krismas
Peace good of Christmas
na mwaka mpya wenye mafanikio
and year new with success

Contact us at the address below to let us know how we can be praying for you too.

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.

If you don't desire to receive this newsletter, email us or call or write

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Connect with us.

Email us at vance.becker@lcms.org & linda.becker@lcmsintl.org, or send us postal mail at the Mission Central address below.

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, which is 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 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-66861

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- 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.