

Greetings from Tanzania! (by Chris)

Hujambo? Habari zako, rafiki? These are just a few of the ways to greet people in Tanzania. Our new year has been a blessed time so far. After several very long plane rides, we safely arrived in Mwanza on December 30th. George and Michelle Otte and Joanne Miya graciously hosted us for our first week in TZ- a week full of introductions, good food, bad roads, and lots of naps. We celebrated New Year's with several members of the larger Maryknoll community and began the new year by watching a gang of kids run down the street banging on pots and chanting in an impromptu parade. During the week, we also were able to meet our future work supervisors and learn more about our ministries. However, before we start work, we have language school...



The 2012 MKLM Tanzania Community



Classroom at the Makoko Language School. Most classes are just three people, so we get a lot of attention.

Makoko Language School (by Katie)

On January 6th, Chris and I along with the other new Lay Missioners headed up to Musoma, about a 3-hour drive north, to the Makoko Language School. The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers started the school in the 1960's, though the school was transferred over to the local Catholic diocese about 10 years ago. Chris and I attend five classes a day, each 40 minutes long with a 5-minute break in between. Classes run until 12:30, followed by ½ hour lunch and an hour rest. After the rest hour we have 45 minutes in the language lab when we listen to tapes of the stories (hadithi) and dialogues (mazungumzo) and practice exercises (mazoezi) from the lessons of the day.

Chris and I have quickly learned that language school is quite taxing, and by the end of the day we are mentally exhausted. Despite our exhaustion, we usually spend the last 45 minutes of the class day sitting with the teachers under a tree in the front yard of the school to practice our newly acquired Swahili. This time also gives us an opportunity to ask them questions about Tanzanian culture and customs. The teachers are native Tanzanians from various tribes and different parts of the country and represent a diversity of ages. They are all really fantastic people! In fact, on several occasions we have had the opportunity to visit the homes of our teachers, which is an excellent cultural experience. Chris and I will remain at language school until early April, at which time we will return to Mwanza to start our work ministries. We know how vital it will be to speak in the local language when we start work, so we feel blessed to have this time to concentrate on language acquisition. We look forward to these next two months as we continue to grow in our Kiswahili knowledge!

Updates on Our Future Ministries

During our week in Mwanza, we had the chance to meet with our future supervisors and learn more details about the work projects we will be doing after language school. Katie met with Mr. Paul Mashimba, director of the Caritas program in the Diocese of Mwanza. Starting in April, Katie will work in the Diocesan Women's Desk, assisting with programs on a variety of gender-equality topics as well as reviewing policies within the diocese to ensure that women's issues are adequately addressed. Paul was excited to have Katie lend her expertise to the overall Caritas office in addition to the Women's Desk. While Katie has expertise in women's issues, her experiences thus far have been mostly tied to an American context, so she looks forward to learning how women's issues manifest in Tanzanian society where they confront issues such as female genital mutilation (FGM), prohibitive property ownership laws for women, and the killing of elderly women rumored to be witches, to name just a few.



Katie and Paul Mashimba



Chris and Constantia Mbogoma

Chris also met with his future supervisor, Ms. Constansia Mbogoma, the director of the Tanzanian branch of Capacitar, an international health and wellness program. In Ms. Mbogoma's work with Capacitar, she became involved in several women's cooperatives and decided to branch out and provide support for these groups. Chris will be responsible for visiting the co-ops, listening to their stories, and building relationships with the women. Rather than set-up businesses (they are already established), he will offer advice and connect the co-op members with resources that will help their businesses to grow. First and foremost, he will listen to these women's stories and learn about the details of their projects. The co-ops are bigger than what Chris initially realized; there are three different co-ops, but one cooperative has over 80 members, so there will be plenty of work to do.

Lisa's Pride (by Chris)

While we have been in language school in Musoma, Katie and I have had the chance to visit the house of a fellow MKLMer (Liz Mach) and a Maryknoll Sister (Sister Marion) to spend time helping with Sr. Marion's program for children with HIV. The program (called Lisa's Pride) provides medical and nutritional support for the kids, but most importantly, it allows a safe place for these kids to just be kids, away from the hardships of their lives and the social stigma that often comes with HIV+ status. We have had a great time playing soccer, putting together puzzles, jumping rope with the kids, and getting "schooled" in checkers. It's always a nice break from the struggles of learning the language, but the kids are always happy to teach us new Swahili words.

That's it for this newsletter. Thank you for your support and prayers! We couldn't do this without you!

God bless,

Chris and Katie Reid