

1 March 2019

Salamu marafiki

Thank you for all your messages and words of encouragement. I've tried to reply to as many of you as possible and please forgive me if I haven't, but the internet in the house continues to cause me grief, so I bought a dongle. But guess what.....? that works everyone on campus EXCEPT at my house! I guess somethings just aren't meant to be, so I gain extra walks to the staffroom and use the WiFi there (when it's working reasonably) and my dongle as a back-up. Still, I am thankful that I can access WiFi. Strangely enough, though, the mobile data on my phone is generally ok at my house. How reliant we have become on our phones, internet etc. It has certainly revolutionised life here with people as addicted to their phones as we are in the UK.

I had just arrived back at MTC the last time I wrote. I am now fully entrenched in college life and enjoying it to the full. I spent the first week trying to find my feet, working out who was who and determining which class was where. The staff held a welcome meal for me one evening and the following Sunday the Bishop invited Karen (the American English teacher) and myself to dinner with him, his wife and son.

The following week, I accompanied the Bishop and 3 American visitors, who were here on behalf of the charity 'Carpenter's Kids' which supports a number of projects in the diocese, to visit the projects they support. It was an extremely full-on but very interesting, if long, week. On Tuesday we drove for many hours as we visited Buigiri Primary School for blind and visually impaired (V.I.) students. It was fascinating watching the students as they learnt to write braille using their special tools. They proudly showed us how they 'played football' (or roll the ball) and one very accomplished student played the keyboard whilst the choir sang



playing 'football'

for us. They are well supported by the staff and last year, there was a 100% pass rate of level 7 students (age 13/14 and final year of primary school in Tanzania) in the public exams, enabling them to go onto secondary school; mainly the Diocesan school in Mvumi which has a V.I. unit, and was our next stop on this long day. The next stop was at Matumbulu, where former catechist classrooms are going to be converted into a school for deaf pupils, this was followed by a service in the local church where the new catechists were waiting for the Bishop to license them. Everyone was very welcoming and hospitable, providing us with a meal at the end of each visit. This was a lesson in pacing myself and only eating small amounts in each place. 4 meals in one day is far too much!

The next day we visited the Diocesan Vocational Conservation and Agriculture Training Centre which helps to support the local communities teaching them and supporting them in lending and borrowing, serving and supporting. They also teach sustainable agriculture enabling the farmers to yield better crops especially in the drier seasons being experienced. The rains in Dodoma this year are particularly bad and many crops are looking very sorry for themselves and dying. It is certainly a bad year for the farmers in this area. We also visited a Vocational school which runs courses for students who don't pass their 'O' levels on carpentry, metal work, dressmaking/tailoring and conservation and agriculture. I received my first Tanzanian dress there made by one of the students.



sustainable agriculture



some of my Pastoral Care Group

Thursday I was free to make a start on preparing my sermon for the following Sunday. In fact, I had to since it was my only free day that week. I'd been asked by one of the lecturers 2 days previously, who is also the priest of the village church, if I would preach the following Sunday. Of course, I had to say 'yes', but my first question was 'who would translate?' All the staff and students at the college are part of Pastoral Care Groups and every other Sunday each group will support one of the local churches and take the

services there. I am in the Principal's group, Hilda, so she translated for me. Everyone was very pleased that I introduced myself in Swahili, having written it down previously. In spite of having my sermon translated, it was the longest one I have ever given, though probably relatively short by their standards, but it was certainly well received.

Friday saw me on the road again with the Bishop and team as we travelled for 2 hours – 1 hour along tarmac and 1 hour along a dirt track. I was sitting sideways on along a seat in the back of the landrover with 2 others, being thrown around as the driver tried avoiding potholes, rocks etc. We arrived at a small and relatively new village that had been built 8km from the nearest water supply which was a well in the previous village we had passed through. Approximately 1km before our destination we were met by many villagers who welcomed us, then formed a procession and proceeded to lead us whilst singing and dancing as we made our way to our destination. It was slow progress! There were Masai in full decorative costumes, drums beating, singing, clapping. In the end we got out and walked as we wanted to be a part of it. It was a very special experience as we greeted people, other held



some of our welcomers

our hands speaking the local language ChiGogo (their Mother tongue) to us, whilst we replied in Swahili, to which they laughed as some didn't know Swahili. It's not unusual to hear ChiGogo as it is the Mother tongue for most of the students, so I now also know how to greet people and respond in ChiGogo! For those who speak English, it is their third language, and they are good.

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walking with our welcomers

The main thing that amazed me about this village in the back of beyond was that they had a wonderful PA system, so everyone from miles around would have heard the celebratory music and singing that was going on.



the Mother's union playing

Saturday, being the final day of this mega tour of the locality was to a leprosy village where there is a large community of healed lepers who have not been accepted back into their home villages. The Diocese has built houses, a bore hole and gives them school uniforms for the children, but like other places, they too have challenges with food shortages due to poor crop yields from lack of rain. Then followed a very interesting visit to Hombolo Mission Hospital, the leprosy hospital.

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Masai dancing for us



Here, I saw my first active case of leprosy. The hospital has a modern operating theatre, but unfortunately not the equipment to use it, a dispensary which is somewhat smaller with a limited choice of drugs, 2 wards and a busy laboratory. It is from here that they send out mobile clinics into the community to test for HIV, leprosy, malaria and Tb, treating the locals as required.

Everyone loves visitors

All in all, it was a very exhausting week culminating with preaching on the Sunday, but it was such a privilege to be part of it, to see so much of what is happening within the diocese and to meet many of the locals, gaining a small insight into village life. They see the visit of Westerners as 'blessings' to them, but I think we gained far more than our presence gave. It was a very humbling experience.



The dispensary at Hombolo

29th March (I don't know where the time has gone!)

Since then, the weeks have fallen into more of a pattern of college life. Chapel at 7.30am followed by classes at 8. I'm assisting in the English class, taking it when Karen isn't around, I attend the African Traditional Religion classes with different groups of students since I felt it is important that I understand the culture and traditions better. It is certainly helping me to do that, as well as being able to share the Western perspective and way of life. I am doing a lot of English conversation with the students, but they are also enjoying teaching me Swahili phrases and I now know 4 words of greeting in Chigogo which impresses the locals when I go out walking, so that they continue in Chigogo, but then I'm stuck and look blank, turning to the student who may be with me to help me! Proof-reading student's assignments, giving first aid where needed, being a listening ear and getting involved where I can, are also part of my week, as well as my daily walks. I've attended an ordination, licencing of catechists, both in the same week and both services were about 4 hours in length. Having to robe for both was not a pleasant experience due to the heat factor. I was positively melting in my cassock (I've borrowed a cotton one from the college rather than bring my

warm wool mix one), surplus and stole and managed to get through a litre of water in the service. The main thing I love about these services are the local choirs who come and dance and sing as part of the worship. In spite of the heat, I end up jiggling along to the rhythm. I go to the Fellowship meetings Friday and Sunday evenings that the students have dancing and worshipping with them. I'm even now joining in singing some of the Swahili words. It's wonderful how the Holy Spirit can speak to your heart even when you don't understand what others are singing. Their intercessory prayer times are loud and vibrant as they pour out their hearts to the Lord. They have no inhibitions and it is wonderful to be part of it.



A few of the student's children

I have decided to remain primarily at Msalato, as it was too unsettling to be moving every few weeks between here and Mvumi, but once the term has ended at the end of May, I will probably return to Mvumi and do some more clinical skills work with the students and lecture the staff nurses.

I have rabbited on enough for now but have a few requests for prayer.

Please continue to pray for rain. There has been no rain in the past month and many crops are now dying. This means hardship and hunger lies ahead for the villagers. It also affects many students as their college fees come from the sale of their/their family crops.

My business visa expires 21/04/19. I am not allowed another one, but the Bishop is hopefully seeing someone today to try and get an extension for me so I can continue my volunteering until the end of June. Please pray for the right solution, especially in the light of Pippa arriving on the 22nd April to visit me and do some sight-seeing.

I will try not to leave it so long before my next newsletter, but I do like to live life to the full and make the most of whatever opportunity presents itself!

God bless you all and thank you for your continued interest, prayers and support.

Love Mary xx



cordon bleu



shy mongoose



woodland kingfisher



traditional mud house



Farming methods



Baobab trees, the national tree



fetching and carrying