

Christmas Greetings from Makang'wa



Dear Friends,

It is a long time since the September Report. I apologize for the delay. However in the meantime I have had the joy of seeing so many of you during my visits to Australia and Montana. The picture shows Cathy Lease from Billings holding a child during the celebration morning with the Grades 1 – 2 children, plus a few older ones. I believe Cathy was thinking, “Do I really have to leave here!” I was a wonderful celebration. All of the children received knitted ‘beanies’. We had a great display of colorful heads. We are most encouraged by the growth of this ministry with the Children of Peace.

I pray that you may be greatly blessed in the joy and peace which comes to us in the Christmas season. The angels sang “Peace on earth and good will towards men.” You may recall the event during WWII when soldiers from both sides left the trenches and together celebrated the birth of the savior – and then, according to the command of earthly superiors, returned to war! If only God in the gift of Jesus Christ was truly welcomed and recognized as Lord and Saviour what a wonderful world this would be. Yet for all who love the Lord it is WONDERFUL as we live in the love of God in Jesus Christ and determine to ‘walk in love’ in this conflicted world. May His peace be your motivation to perseverance and endurance.

Christmas will be a ‘stable experience’ for most people in this region. We are in near famine conditions. In fact many people are certainly experiencing great food deprivation. Some of you will recall Gerishom, the young lad in my Presentation who was cured from the terrible skin condition. Today, together with a young friend, he came to the house begging for work to be able to get some food. They carried their ‘far too large hoes’ and looked at me with assured expectation. What could one do? Such an expectation must find a good response.

I therefore ask you to pray earnestly for rain to ensure a sufficient harvest *and for a provision of immediate relief for the people*. We are all somewhat stressed. Most of us are about at the end of our resources and therefore understand the urgency (and the peace) of the phrase, “give us this day our daily bread.” When we arrived here in late 2005 all was new. That was a time of famine but at that time the people were as strangers to us. Now they are truly a part of us and we of them. We have become as family. Therefore the present crisis has a personal impact, day by day. In your Christmas ‘gifting’ do remember the people here.

Yesterday my driver and friend Juma and his daughter Selma were baptized at St. Peter’s School Chapel. Juma was a Muslim. His daughter had recently been raised as a Christian. Christian names were taken. Juma is now James Juma Ally. Selma is Catherine Selma Ally. Cathy Lease from Billings, Mt, you have a godchild here in central Tanzania. Your evident faith and love touched James very deeply. We are praying for James’ wife Zaidia. She is a Muslim from the Kondoa region. The Muslims there are of the more radical kind and are strongly opposed to James’ baptism. There is great pressure put on his wife and James is receiving abusive phone calls. She is deeply unhappy. We fear that there may be a separation. Jesus did speak of the ‘sword of separation’. He does not desire it but he warned all who would follow him of that possible reality.

There is an outbreak of cholera in a village adjacent to Makang'wa. That is always a possibility in times of famine and dwindling water supply. The village near us is under quarantine. All shallow wells in the region, including two of ours, have been treated with chemicals. However there is no threat to us here at the Center nor to anyone who takes only the water from the deep well.

We are most thankful to the people of Australia, Montana and now England for your hospitality, generosity and love. My recent visits to Australia and Montana were memorable in so many ways. We are truly blessed. God, who knows our needs, delights to be our provider. It has been a slight adjustment to leave *cool* Montana and arrive back here to days reaching 106%. We welcome Alison Jackson from Brisbane this coming Saturday. Maybe she will bring the rain! Among other recent visitors was Carey Westwood of Global Development in Brisbane. We enjoyed her visit and look forward to a longer stay next year. James Dale from Birmingham, England spent several weeks here and became a loved part of the community. He is pictured here with some of the Amani workers. He will be an effective ambassador for Amani in England. And, my sister Valerie and brother in law Ivan continue in loving service here.

Every blessing.

Fr. John

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