

Reflections from My Kenyan Journey – 2023

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us? And I said, “Here am I. Send Me!” – Isaiah 6:8

Growing up in church as a young child and learning about missionaries serving around the world, Africa seemed to be the farthest place on earth from South Georgia. I was always intrigued with different cultures but experiencing them first hand appeared out of reach. It was not until the fall of 2022 that I felt it was being laid on my heart to travel to Kenya as part of the 2023 team. I wish you could have experienced the moment with me that I realized I was going to my childhood “farthest place on earth - Africa”! God had nudged my heart, I had planned and prepared, and now I was boarding a plane for a 10 day mission trip to Kenya!

As one prepares for a mission trip, you anticipate the projects planned. You pray about how the team will minister to the people you come in contact with. You mentally prepare for the “hardships” of travel, passports, shots and medications, how you will adjust to time changes, lack of sleep, different foods and just being tired. Then you arrive! You experience everything around you in real time! Life IS busy and you ARE tired but you take it all in like breath to your lungs! You realize it is not only a trip but a spiritual journey. Finally, you arrive home with a rollercoaster of memories and emotions to process. There is where the question arises, what did I REALLY take away from my journey on my first mission experience in Kenya?

I took away gratefulness.

Grateful to be entrusted by Jasper UMC to deliver the hope and help our projects would bring. Grateful that 23 babies (3 and under) have a place to be cared for by loving caregivers in their orphanage. Grateful to see faces of children that would light up just to get a cup of rice with vegetables and vitamins in it at school. Grateful to learn how to sing, dance and mud a house all at the same time. Grateful to see a child with malaria receive a medication, which might cost \$2, for free from the free clinic. Grateful to see widows who now feel empowered to have new purpose and worth in their communities. Grateful for friendships with stronger bonds because of the travel together. Grateful to know children will be children and always love to play. Grateful to be reminded of faithfulness to our Lord when there is plenty and when there is little. Grateful to see the God created landscapes from green mountainous terrain to the flat African savanna. Grateful to experience hearing the grunts and groans of hippos less than 100 yards from where I was sleeping.

The list could go on. Experiencing Kenya for the first time was in itself a step of faith into the unknown. I went accepting a calling God had laid on my heart expecting to give of myself. I returned feeling physically tired but spiritually renewed in a way that can only be explained through the experience. When we visited the Dominion boarding school the students shared a performance with us. One of the little songs contained the lyrics “Do not let me go the same way I came. Touch me with your spirit,..... Jesus.” As I heard this song I realized this was the theme of my journey on this trip.

I still sing this little tune. I remember my journey..... and.... I am grateful. May I forever be changed. AMEN.

Lydia Meadows