

February 22, 2009

Jambo and Greetings from Tanzania,

We (Stan Taylor and Nathan Partain) arrived in Mailisita last night and wanted to share with you what we learned on our first day back to the project since last July.

We attended mass this morning at the Mailisita parish church. Even sneaking into the back of the church a minute or two late did not allow us to escape notice of the congregation. Toward the end of mass, which had been entirely in Swahili, we were summoned to the alter by surprise and asked to, “say a few words”. Yikes! After stumbling through some broken Swahili the bilingual priest translated who we were and why we’re here for us. The assembled people (a couple hundred) were emphatic in expressing their appreciation for the work we are all doing for the village’s poor and orphaned children.

After mass we sat down with Fr. Kawishe (Fr. Val’s brother) and got reacquainted. Father shared with us some interesting stories of challenges he and the project have overcome in the past few months. He told us the school and guesthouse construction project had been suspended for a month or so by the government and that they threatened to take him to court. He told us of the challenge they faced in pouring the concrete slab for the 2nd floor of the Guesthouse. The challenges were overcome, but provide insight into the complexities of development in Tanzania.

Apparently the “Board of Contractors” (sounds like the equivalent of our village engineer) made a surprise visit to the job site and were very unhappy that we did not have a licensed general contractor on site nor any sign posted indicating the licensed architect, engineer, electrician, etc.. The project had made a conscious decision not to hire a general contractor due to the cost and questionable value and instead had the work supervised directly by the architect (Mike Mosha) who generously made his and his Engineer’s time available to the project for a very low price (Mike Mosha is the architect used by the arch diocese for all construction projects in the area and is greatly respected). Even this information was not enough to satisfy the bureaucratic machinery. Fortunately, our project’s longtime friend, Lucas Tarimo, who is on the board of the NGO (NonGovernmental Organization) we established in Tanzania for the benefit and guidance of the project, is by profession a licensed contractor.



He stepped forward and donated his services as “licensed contractor” in order to satisfy the local authorities.

On the positive side, in their suspicion about the project, the Board of Contractors dispatched inspectors who reported back that the design and construction were of the highest quality.

As to the pouring the concrete for the guesthouse 2nd floor slab, Nathan and I had both wondered how ~150 tons of cement concrete were going to be elevated and poured 15’

above grade without aid of modern equipment. In the US, we would use a series of concrete “pumper” trucks and have it done in a day. The nearest such equipment could surprisingly be found an hour away in Arusha, but was judged far too expensive for the project to afford. The prospect of doing the job by hand with unskilled volunteers was also unworkable due to the importance of the task to the integrity of the building and the “months” it would take for available volunteers to complete such an undertaking. An area contractor named Dema Construction came to our rescue as a personal favor to Fr. Kawishe given that the project was so noble in intent. He brought in 50 of his workers who labored for 5 straight days to mix, carry up, and pour the 150 tons of concrete. He provided the expensive vibration equipment require for such a pour as well as food and transportation for his workers and charged us little more than to cover his own actual costs.



Father Kawishe’s and his colleagues’ frugality and resourcefulness continue to impress us!



We finished the day off with a nice meal of chipati na cucu served outdoor in view of Mount Kilimanjaro on the balcony of the Mama Clementine guesthouse where we are staying. Did we mention that it is 90+ degrees and sunny here? ☺

Tomorrow, we hope to meet with the children and quiz them on their English skills!

We hope to post you updates each day or so of our week here in Mailisita as well as to send you pictures upon our return.

Fr. Kawishe wishes to express his thanks to you for your amazing generosity.

Kwaheri,

Stan & Nathan