

January
2024

KEEPING UP WITH KENYA

Monthly Newsletter



WHAT IS GOD TEACHING US?

Rachel-

I will be transparent and say that I have not read my Bible every day this month. However, I have started a Romans Bible study that my mother-in-law gave to me for Christmas. It has taught me the importance of slowing down and rereading one chapter or section. I have spent this month studying Romans 1. It is a great reminder that the good news of Jesus Christ is for EVERYONE, believers and non-believers.



“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek.” ~Romans 1:16

Caleb-

I have been reading through Ecclesiastes 1st, 2nd, 3rd, John, and Rude this month. Through these readings, I have learned that, despite the challenge humanity's curse brings to life, there is unwavering hope and love that comes from God. I have seen this hope and love in several ways this month! Through conversations with co-workers, family, friends, students, and especially through Rachel, I have seen our hope in Christ.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God... This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. -1 John 4:7 & 9

MERCY Nairobi

To finish out 2023, Pastor Allan and Pastor Jordan, taught the church about deacons. Once all church members understood what the role of a deacon would look like for Mercy Nairobi Church, members were able to nominate other members that met the qualifications.

Once all nominations were submitted, Pastor Jordan individually contacted all nominees. He reminded nominees of the qualifications, shared a timeline for training, and asked if the person felt they could meet the expectations and serve as a deacon in the church.

8 nominees were willing to continue moving forward with the potential of becoming a deacon. They are currently reading a book and going through training with Allan. Once the training is complete, the nominees who want to continue moving towards becoming a deacon will be presented to the church.



During the month of January, we went through a short 3-week series called “Secrets we should Keep”. These sermons walked us through spiritual disciplines found in Matthew 6 including prayer, giving/generosity, and fasting/humility. Copy the link below if you want to listen.

<https://www.mercynairobi.com/post/secrets-we-should-keep>

MERCY *house*

Mercy House has had many transitions in the month of January. Resident A. (who I shared about) transitioned out. Her sons P. and M. were in the Mercy House preschool program. I miss them already but am proud of their mom for being ready to be independent. Please pray for Resident A. and her three sons (A., P., and M.). Resident A. is trying to run a juice shop while her two oldest sons attend school.

Another resident unfortunately had to be expelled but we are still helping her transition to independence for the next 6 months. This is Resident S. and her two daughters (S. and V.). Her daughter V. was also in Mercy House Preschool, so we have gone from 5 children to 2 children in the New Year. Resident S. is trying to build a business selling beads and doing hair. Please pray for her business to be successful and for her two daughters to do well in school.

Lastly, we have Resident J1. that is currently suspended. She did not meet the expectation of using kind words and being respectful. When given an opportunity to apologize and accept consequences, she refused. Please pray for J1 and that her heart would be softened. We would love for her to apologize and return to Mercy House.



Mercy House Preschool

We've been going to the park every Thursday to get outside and be active. Other days of the week have been filled with crafts, puzzles, singing, and more!



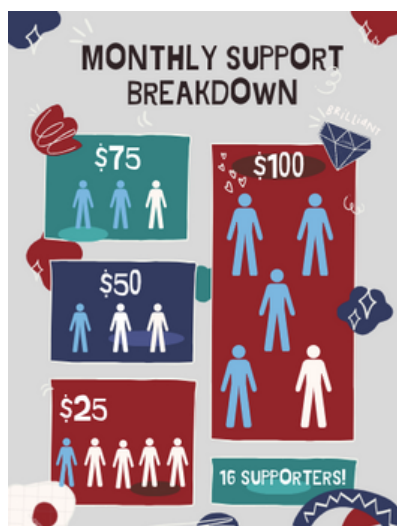
WEST NAIROBI SCHOOL

The Second Semester is in full swing at West Nairobi School I was excited to return to the classroom at the start of January and be with my students. Unfortunately, the year started with some sickness in the Darden household. I had a pretty nasty sinus infection, and my students were the first to realize that something was off. Apparently, I am not as loud and excited when I am not feeling well. Luckily, with some medicine and several days of bed rest, I was back in the class as loud, energetic, and on fire for the Gospel as usual.



This semester, I get to disciple a student one-on-one every Tuesday afternoon. Please join me in prayer as I seek to teach him the foundations of the Christian faith. He already has a thorough understanding of the Gospel, and I hope to help guide him in his next steps as he continues his walk with Christ.

Additionally, I have a Teacher's Assistant (TA) that I work with three times a week. He has already been an enormous help in grading work and giving me ideas to help make classes fun. We have already tackled several hard questions and had discussions about the Bible during our time together.



This chart represents support during Caleb's time at West Nairobi School. The blue figures represent commitments and the light figures represent what is still needed.

Currently, there are 8 of the 16 needed supporters that have made commitments for the next two years. I am excited to see what God has planned for the other 8 or more. If you or someone you know would like to give, please email me at calebmdarden@gmail.com

WHAT'S NEXT?!?! RACHEL (JULY 2024-JUNE 2026)

God was so good and faithful in late 2021-summer 2022 to provide through friends and family the funds for my original two-year commitment with Mercy House. I am fully funded through one-time, annual, and monthly givers through June 2024. Caleb and I have prayed thoroughly over my next opportunity in Kenya and God has led me back into the classroom. I will be teaching lower elementary at West Nairobi School starting in July 2024. I have committed to at least two years with the school. Caleb and I are both excited to teach at West Nairobi School as well as continue to serve at Mercy House and with Mercy Nairobi Church.

West Nairobi School provides a stipend for teachers but we are still encouraged to raise funds to supplement the stipend. The school is providing 40% of what my income is with Mercy House. Therefore, my goal is to raise the other 60% to maintain the income I currently have.

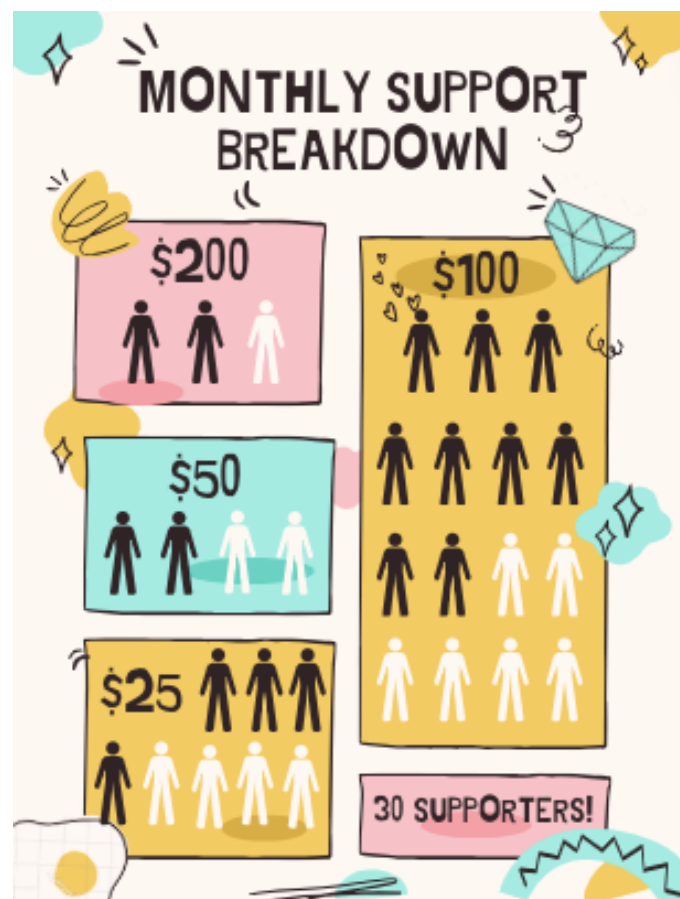
Would you pray about financially supporting Rachel at West Nairobi School?

UPDATED!!!!

This chart represents support during Rachel's time at West Nairobi School from July 2024-June 2026. The dark figures represent commitments and the light figures represent what is still needed.

Currently, there are **17 of the 30 (60%)** needed supporters that have made commitments for the next two years. I am excited to see what God has planned for the other 13 (40%) or more.

If you or someone you know would like to give, please email me at rachelyoung826@yahoo.com



PERSONAL UPDATE

We made it back to Kenya safely. It was a long journey and very tiring, but we praise God that it went smoothly. On day 3 of returning, we both got sick again. Ongoing sickness since September/October was becoming tiresome. But God is the Great Physician. He has healed us both and we have had a great last 10 days in January.

Caleb has started his PhD course work back up. He is doing a great job of working hard during the week so that we can spend time together and explore Kenya together on the weekends. We've also been spending a lot of time with our friend Sean. His wife, Yvonne, is pregnant and it has been a difficult pregnancy filled with nausea, insomnia, and aches. We are thankful that he has still been able to spend time with us.

Caleb got to enjoy his first sugar cane experience. Sean helped us get it from a man selling it on the side of the road. We are thankful that Sean helps us experience Kenyan culture in a safe way.



Sean is also Rachel's Swahili teacher. The deal was that we would pay him half price of a normal tutor but that we would make him an American meal to share our culture as well. He wanted to learn how to make American biscuits so that's exactly what we did. It was so much fun!



PRAYER REQUESTS

Rachel

- Overall health physically, mentally, and spiritually
- Being able to prioritize spending time with God (reading the Bible and praying) with the routine change of Caleb working on his PhD
- Support Raising

Caleb

- Overall health physically, mentally, and spiritually
- Motivation, time, and energy to complete his PhD coursework well
- Opportunities to share the Gospel daily at West Nairobi School

Mercy Nairobi Church

- 8 deacon candidates that are going through training
- Family groups to continue growing in vulnerability and connection
- Pastor Allan and Pastor Jordan are interviewing candidates for a College Director position

Mercy House

- Resident A. and her 3 sons (A., P, and M.)
- Resident S. and her 2 daughters (S. and V.)
- Resident J. to desire reconciliation
- Current residents to maintain motivation as they move towards independence