

April 2024

KEEPING UP WITH KENYA

Monthly Newsletter

Rachel

What is God teaching Us?

This month has been one of the most challenging months for me in Kenya so far. My time studying the Bible was not as steady as I want it to be. However, my time in prayer has been special. Each and every day (often multiple times a day) I was coming to the Lord and asking Him to give me the strength and endurance to make it through the day. He has humbled me and my independent nature and taught me to truly rely on Him. How sweet!

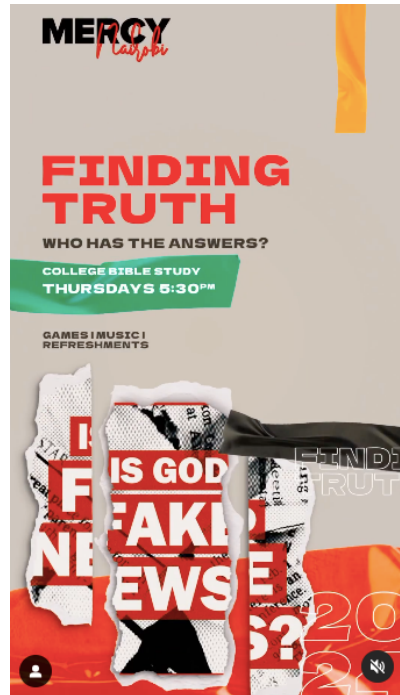
“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.” ~Isaiah 41:10

Caleb

This past month, my reading plan has wrapped up Mark, begun Luke, and continued in Proverbs and Psalms. I've relished the opportunity to read through the gospels multiple times in a single year, reminding me of the selfless love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. Reading Proverbs multiple times this year has also been a blessing. The practical wisdom it offers, along with guidance towards hard work and making wise decisions, has truly resonated with me this year. Lastly, God has been teaching me about perseverance and the importance of running the race to win. The school year is ending in a month, I'll be taking a break from my Ph.D. courses in a week, and Rachel and I are looking forward to visiting North Carolina soon. It would be easy to give in to laziness, but now is the time to persevere and finish strong.

“But I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.” ~Acts 20:24

MERCY Nairobi



College Bible Study has started! College Director, Sean, and other members of the church spent a few weeknights in March evangelizing and canvassing a few college campuses to promote the new college ministry. This month they have been meeting on Thursday nights for fellowship. The first few weeks had great attendance and wonderful discussion as they seek the truth that the Bible has to offer. However, the last few weeks of the month had lower attendance due to the rain. Please pray for Sean as he makes decisions for the college ministry. He has the desire to see a gospel awakening on the college campuses of Nairobi, but needs wisdom in executing this as the rains continue to pour and bring challenges for attendance.



We are still going through our Mark series. Pastor Allan was in the States for the month of April. Pastor Jordan preached two Sundays and two members preached as guest preachers. Click the link below if you would like to listen to the sermons in this series.

<https://www.mercynairobi.com/post/come-follow-me>

MERCY *house*



We've been open for an entire year! April 29th was the mark of the first year of Mercy House. We praise God for His provision and guidance leading to this milestone.

The Kenyan school system was on a break the entire month of April. We try to find creative ways to make the break fun. We built many forts and obstacle courses with the couch cushions. We also took a field trip to a local counseling center for a fun day.



We continue to make prayer and Bible reading a priority over the school breaks. Showing these children the love of God and truth of His Word is the most important thing we can do.

April was my last month of full time at Mercy House. I can't believe it. As part of my transition plan, I will be going in only twice a week for the month of May. This will allow the Kenyan staff to have some days without myself and Ashley there. But it will also allow them to ask any last minute questions on the days we are there. My last day with Mercy House will be on May 23.



We also had CPR and First Aid training this month to make sure we are all ready for an emergency since emergency services often don't even show up in Kenya. We pray that we never have to use what we learned but I am glad we are all prepared.



WEST NAIROBI SCHOOL

This month at West Nairobi School, Rachel and I enjoyed chaperoning, DJing, and emceeding the high school prom. It was a delightful evening dedicated to ensuring our students had a memorable time. The following week marked Spirit Week, with themed days: PJ Day on Monday, WNS Spirit Day on Tuesday, Decade Day on Wednesday, Twin Day on Thursday, and Cultural Day on Friday. Students and staff dressed accordingly and engaged in various activities.



My personal challenge was to wear shorts daily; I had great success except for on Tuesday when I found that I lacked maroon shorts.

Cultural Day on Friday allowed students to showcase their heritage during a parent-led festival, highlighting about 20 nations through their cuisine, games, beverages, and trivia. Offerings included German cheesecake,

American pulled pork BBQ, Japanese kimbap, and Congolese caterpillars, among other tasty treats. The week concluded with senior night volleyball, where we celebrated our senior athletes and their parents and rooted for the WNS Rhinos. April was a full month that included a lot of fun, lessons, and daily discussions of the Gospel

PERSONAL UPDATE



“Because You Said So” (BYSS) is Kenya’s first improv comedy show, specializing in short-form improv with standalone games.

The troupe entertains Nairobi with unscripted performances, promising “no script, no rehearsal, and more laughter than you can handle!” Rachel and I attended their April show, celebrating their 10-year anniversary, delighting in jokes that played on familiar cultural references and sharing in the laughter for those we didn’t recognize, including Kiswahili quips. It was a joyous experience that kept us laughing well past our bedtime.



On Saturday, April 20, we got to attend the baby shower for our sweet friends Sean and Yvonne. Sean’s sister was kind enough to include me in the planning of the shower so I got to experience the Kenyan way of putting together a baby shower. We were so happy with how it turned out. The last picture shows Caleb winning the belly bump yarn game!

Some cultural differences we experienced:

- The shower started over an hour late
- The gifts are presented to them but not opened
- Everyone introduces themselves and how they know the couple
(We are continuing to learn and grow in a new culture)





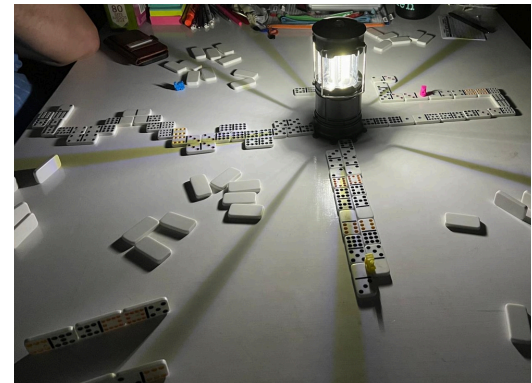
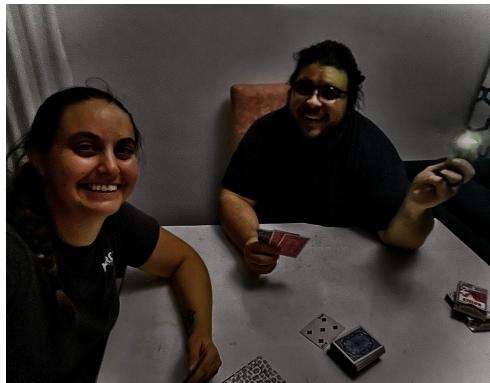
From March 11th to April 9th, the Muslim community observed Ramadan, honoring the belief that the Qur'an was revealed from heaven. 10.9 percent of Kenyans, approximately 5.2 million people, are Muslim. Throughout this holy month, adherents fast rigorously from dawn till sunset. While at work, Caleb observed and prayed over students at West Nairobi School as they followed Ramadan customs. As Ramadan concluded, we both witnessed a significant number of Muslims returning to everyday activities at our local mall. Seeing so many individuals unaware of the Gospel was both illuminating and heartbreaking.



Jamia Mosque Nairobi

Praise God that we have been safe in the flooding.

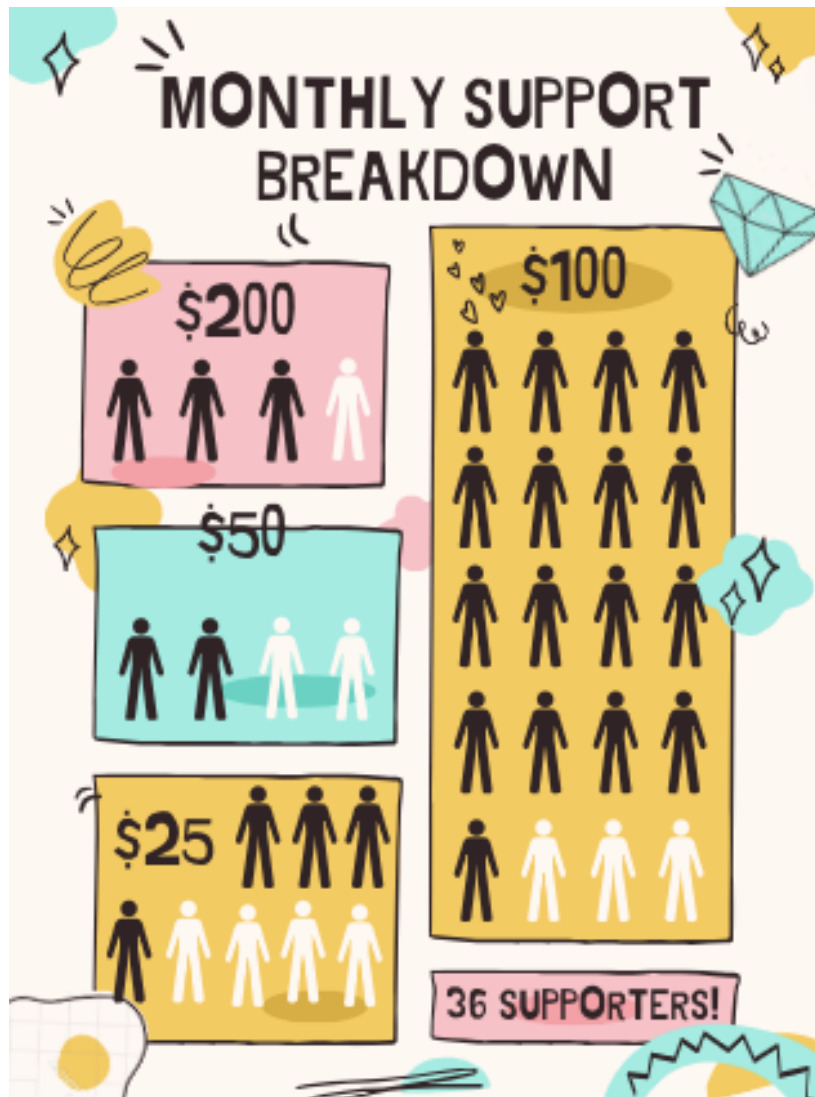
The flooding hasn't impacted Caleb's commute; he was able to work as usual. However, it has severely disrupted Rachel's commute, causing her to miss several workdays due to unsafe routes. Additionally, the flooding has led to numerous power outages, resulting in evenings spent playing games by flashlight.



Please pray for Kenya and other East African countries affected by the flooding. It has already taken many lives and destroyed thousands of homes.

SUPPORT RAISING UPDATE

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



Caleb and I have combined our support raising efforts because we are getting close to our goal. The chart to the above has been updated to represent our combined support goal during our time at West Nairobi School. The dark figures represent commitments and the light figures represent what is still needed.

Currently, there are **26 of the 36 (71%)** needed supporters that have made commitments. We are excited to see what God has planned for the other 10 or more. We currently have commitments for \$2,500 monthly. Our final goal is \$3,500 monthly, which means we are still praying for \$1,000 in monthly commitments.

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

PRAYER REQUESTS

Rachel

- 3 weeks remaining at Mercy House, smooth and healthy transition for myself, staff, residents, and children (last official day is May 23)
- Good health (still fighting off cold and flu viruses)
- Support raising

Caleb

- Current PhD class, final 6-hour exam is on Sunday, May 5th.
- 4 weeks left at West Nairobi School, want to finish strong with student relationships and curriculum pacing
- Student finals as the semester comes to a close
 - Good health
 - Support raising

Mercy Nairobi Church

- College Bible Study attendance
- Family groups to continue to grow
- Pastor Allan as he gets back into his rhythms here in Kenya

Mercy House

- There have been some behavior challenges from a few children and one resident since the move to the new house. Please pray for healing from their past traumas, trust in us as a staff to take care of them, and responsiveness to correction.