

December 2025
January 2026

KEEPING UP WITH KENYA

Monthly Newsletter
dardenmissions.com



WHAT IS GOD TEACHING US?

Rachel

I have started a new reading plan that will go slowly through the New Testament. This month I have been studying the book of Luke. This book is filled with Jesus leading by example. I love seeing how Jesus prays continuously throughout the book. He always makes time for His relationship with God. I am asking God to help me be more like Jesus in my prayer life, intentional and consistent.



“In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.” Luke 6:12

Caleb

We have been reading through Luke this month. One theme I've enjoyed following is the disciples' growth over time. Their dedication and understanding slowly increase as they spend more and more time with Jesus. Likewise, I find myself wondering how my own dedication and understanding have grown—and how they will continue to grow—as I spend time daily reading and memorizing Scripture and praying more consistently.

“And Simon answered, “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.””

Luke 5:5

PERSONAL UPDATE

We apologize for the silence over the past few months. As many of you know from our November update, Rachel began experiencing severe back pain on the 1st of November. She began working closely with doctors and a physical therapist. She underwent imaging and several weeks of treatment, but was largely on bed rest and unable to teach.

As Christmas approached, Rachel was still in pain but was making encouraging progress. Both her general practitioner and physical therapist cleared her for our flights home for a Christmas visit. After arriving in the United States, she understandably experienced increased pain from the long travel, but nothing that initially caused serious concern. We were grateful to spend quality time with both of our families and were planning to return to Kenya on January 3rd.

However, on the night of December 31st, Rachel's pain began to intensify significantly. By January 1st, it had escalated to the point that she was unable to walk or move without severe pain. We made the difficult decision to call emergency services, and she was carried from the second-floor bedroom to the ambulance by EMTs and firefighters.

For several days in the hospital, doctors worked diligently to manage her pain, but relief was slow in coming. I have never witnessed someone endure that level of pain, and I pray I never will again. Rachel eventually received a spinal injection that brought significant relief, along with another MRI to reassess the situation. She was discharged on January 6th. Unfortunately, we missed our return flight, though KLM Airlines has been very gracious in working with us during this unexpected change of plans.



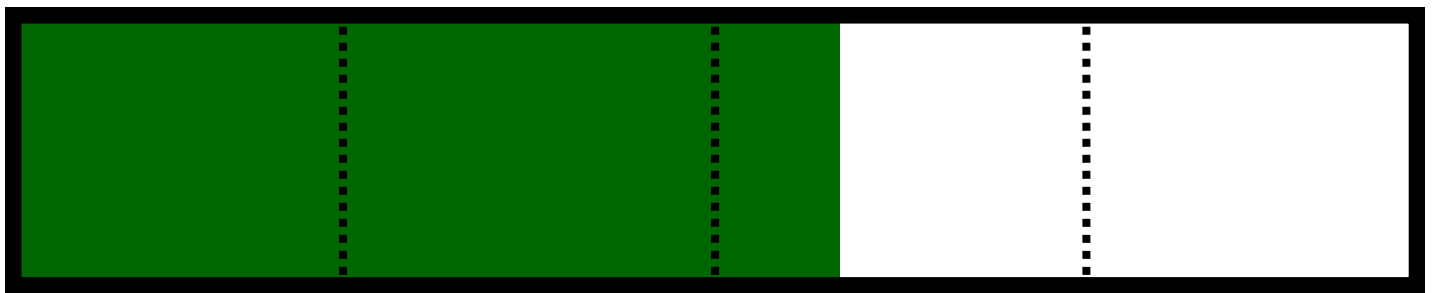
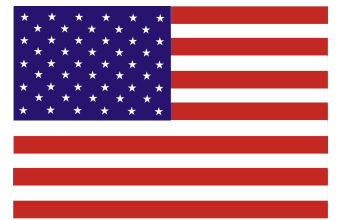
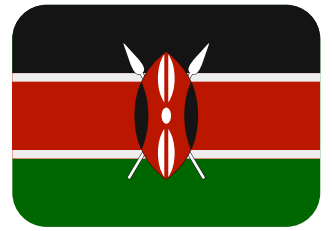
Since then, Rachel has been slowly recovering, with both improvements and setbacks, while continuing physical therapy. After meeting with a spinal specialist and now a spine surgeon, we have been advised that Rachel should not fly anytime soon. Surgery has been scheduled for May; however, the surgeon is hopeful that with continued healing over the next few months, it may not be necessary.

West Nairobi School has been incredibly gracious throughout this season and was able to secure replacements for both Rachel and Caleb. Caleb plans to return to Kenya briefly in mid-February to close out our time there. At the same time, Caleb is actively seeking job opportunities in North Carolina as we discern what the Lord has next for us.

We are deeply saddened to be ending our time in Kenya earlier than expected. At the same time, we are profoundly grateful for how the Lord has sustained and cared for us. His timing is always better than ours, and we trust that He has brought us back to the United States for His good purposes.

Darden Re-entry Support Raising Progress

Our current goal is to reach \$65,000 through one time and monthly gifts. We have received \$37,317. The money will go towards many practical needs (used cars, clothes, debrief retreat, and more) as we transition back to America. The chart below represents the progress towards this goal.



Start \$16,000 \$32,000 \$48,000 \$65,000

Tax-deductible donations can be made with the following steps:

1. Go to www.nics.org/donate.
2. Choose the amount you'd like to donate and select "One Time."
3. For the "Designation" box, choose "School Projects."
4. A comment box will pop up that says "Staff Name or Project Number." Type in "Caleb and Rachel Darden-Project #004425".
5. Complete the billing and payment information. You can use either a debit/credit card or a checking account.
6. Check "I'm not a robot."
7. Select "Review." If any information is incomplete or missing, it will not go to the next page. Make sure to go back to the top of the form and correct any incomplete/missing data.
8. Review the donation and choose "Donate."

Donations can also be made via Venmo: @cdarden0

MERCY Nairobi

This year, we celebrated 33 baptisms, a powerful testimony to God's faithfulness and transforming grace. In December alone, three former Muslims were baptized, a beautiful reminder that God is doing great work in the city, bringing the lost from darkness into His marvelous light. We also rejoice that seven residents have graduated from their 18-month program, and we are especially thankful that six of them will continue serving on staff with Mercy Nairobi. In addition, ten new residents have begun their 18-month program, stepping into areas of ministry that include college (2), kids (2), music (1), missions (3), teens (1), and shepherding (1). We are grateful for how God continues to grow and strengthen this community for His glory.



MERCY *house*



The second cohort of women and children has successfully transitioned out of the program, marking another meaningful milestone in their journey toward stability and independence. During their time with us, these women earned certificates in tailoring, catering, and barista training, equipping them with practical skills to support themselves and their families. Their transition also provides a valuable opportunity for our staff to rest and recover before welcoming the next cohort. Interviews are currently underway as we prayerfully prepare for the next group of women who will begin this transformative journey.

PERSONAL UPDATE



On a happier note, we were grateful to welcome some special visitors in December. We first met Rachel and Luke in June, so it was such a joy to have them come and spend time with us. It was a refreshing and life-giving season as we caught up on all that has unfolded since we met over the summer. We shared a wonderful Thanksgiving meal, visited the Giraffe Centre, went on an incredible safari, enjoyed Ethiopian food, and made many other sweet memories together. After two months marked by pain and hardship, it was such a gift from the Lord to experience laughter, rest, and renewed joy.





We also had the opportunity to return home for Christmas, which felt like another gracious blessing from God. Being surrounded by family was deeply refreshing, and it's hard to believe how much our nieces and nephews have grown while we've been in Kenya. As we reintegrate into life in America, we're looking forward to being intentional about building meaningful, unhurried time with family in this new season.



PRAYER REQUESTS

Rachel

- Healing for her back
- For physical therapy to work so that surgery isn't needed
- Dependence on the Lord instead of her own strength during this season
- trusting God with our finances

Caleb

- job hunting in NC
- safe travels to and from Kenya
- that everything will sell quickly so he can return to NC

West Nairobi School

- Praise God for such supportive administration that have treated us with compassion and love
- For the two teachers that will be taking over our classrooms
- For our students as they make this transition in the middle of the school year

Mercy Nairobi Church & Mercy House

- MN: 10 new residents
- MN: Continued work in the city to bring people from all religious backgrounds to saving faith in Christ
- MH: Interview process for the next cohort of women and children