

Hello, everyone! I just wanted to send an email wishing you all a Merry Christmas, and letting you know how things are going over here in Rwanda.

We seem to still be in a rainy season here: I told a colleague yesterday that it gives me pleasant memories of Christmas at home, because the rain makes it cooler and darker over here than it otherwise would be, and Christmas in Canada also occurs during a cooler and darker part of the year. I am blessed, while here in Rwanda, to be in the company of great colleagues, and I especially enjoy the several advent celebrations I was able to have with them.

It so happens I missed two of those advent get-togethers because I was finally able to return to Tanzania on a work trip, and meet with the Ikoma Language Committee (now officially a Tanzanian Community-Based Organization, or CBO). God made it possible despite some unexpected difficulties with obtaining a short-term business visa. Once we arrived in Tanzania and made our way to Musoma, I was happy to see the Tanzanian colleagues I had just started getting to know when I left several years ago. They were happy to see my colleague and I as well, and were in good spirits. Excitingly, during our first week there the office was holding a language workshop for two language communities that had not yet established a writing system for their language. These two groups also desire to have a Bible in their language, and this workshop in part establishes relations with potential future translators - besides providing important preliminary linguistic training, the workshop allows participants to showcase ability, talent and interest in language development. It is a starting-point for building capacity and investing in fellow-labourers from the community itself.

My main purpose for the trip, however, was to meet with the Ikoma language committee and revisit the idea of a future Ikoma dictionary, and also to meet with an Ikoma speaker to look over the 800+ notes I had added to entries in the Ikoma database (we managed to look at more than three-quarters of them). I'll tell you more about meeting with the committee in my next newsletter, but suffice to say the eleven representatives were very keen on the idea of having a dictionary, and were able to articulate many persuasive reasons for desiring a dictionary along with the Ikoma New Testament. It was great to meet these people, one of whom was the very helpful gentleman I worked with in Musoma for the two weeks. I think they were happy to meet me too; they gave me an Ikoma name during our meeting, which was special, humbling and unexpected on my part.

Speaking of the Ikoma New Testament, the Ikoma community is now planning a dedication ceremony and celebration for April or May, by which time printed copies of the New Testament should finally be available in Ikoma territory. It's very exciting! Despite the difficulty getting into Tanzania this time around, I am still eager to attend if at all possible, and am looking forward to the spring.

I am also looking forward to Christmas, although it snuck up on me this year! Being away from home during this season can be tough, but Kigali is already starting to feel a bit like home in its own right; I was glad to get back to my own apartment and bed after my trip to Tanzania! And again, I am blessed with not only wonderful colleagues over here, but also a good local congregation of which to be a part.

Of course, I still miss all you people who are a part of my church family back home in Canada and Alaska. And I especially think of those of you in Lower Mainland BC these days, keeping you in my prayers as you recover from various natural disasters this year. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas season with your friends and families, and I look forward to updating you and hearing from you in January if not earlier. Thanks for your prayers and support - I felt a lot of courage on my recent trip to Tanzania, which was full of new and sometimes uncomfortable experiences, knowing that I was being prayed for, and I know God was listening to those prayers as well. Praise God for a safe trip there and back, for a coworker (who can drive stick shift!) to travel with, and for the work that got done.

God bless,

Nora