

The LCF Connection

April 2014

Reflections from Kenya

Abraham and Naomy Ndungu interviewed by Vicki Sairs

Many of you know that Naomy and Abraham Ndungu spent the better part of three months in Kenya this year, under the warm African sun while we enjoyed bracing, single-digit temperatures here in Tundra Central. Abraham left in January; Naomy joined him later. They returned on March 9.

Why did they go? What did they do? And why on earth did they return to Ohio before spring?

They went in part because Abraham was leading Rosedale Bible College's second Kenya Cross-Cultural Term. Under Abraham's direction and with Naomy's help, a dozen Rosedale students spent six weeks studying and living at the Regions Beyond Ministries Retreat Center near Thika, traveling on weekends and visiting Kenyan churches.



Abraham and other Kenyans with the 12 RBC students who traveled to Kenya for a cross-cultural term of study.

Photo credit: Regions Beyond Ministry

But the Ndungus went for other reasons too: Naomy needed to clear up bureaucratic details with a former employer, to see old friends, and, most important of all, to reconnect with family. Naomy hasn't been back home since they moved to the States in December 2009. What was that like for her?

She lights up as she tells about flying into Nairobi in the evening, expecting her sister to be at the airport to pick her up. She knew she would have to wait to see the rest of her family until she could make the long trip from Nairobi to her mother's home.

Imagine her delight when she saw not just her sister waiting at the airport, but her brothers as well. And things only got better. When they drove her to her sister's home in Nairobi, who should be there but another sister and, best of all, Naomy's mother!

"It was very overwhelming," says Naomy, smiling. "She's the first person I wanted to see." They stayed up until 3 a.m., catching up on four years of not being together, not watching the children grow up together, not trading news with each other over a cup of chai.

"I spent three days with Mom," she says. She felt "like a little baby" being nourished by her mother, and her mother was "so happy" to be able to "feed" her daughter in this way, just by loving her and being with her.

"She had very many questions," says Naomy. "And of course, she had to know every detail about her grandkids . . . literally everything about Danny, Grace and Shepherd."

Challenges of the trip:

Dealing with people's perceptions of what their life is like here in Ohio: "There is still the mentality," says Abraham, "that since we are living in the 'land of plenty' we

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Abraham teaching at a leadership seminar.

Photo credit: Regions Beyond Ministry

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Visiting at the city of Thika.

Photo credit: The Regions Beyond Ministry

must have lots of money." The reality is different, and he and Naomi can read between the lines in Kenya. People are thinking, "You're in America, but you don't look like you've come here with lots of money."

Knowing how to respond to the "glaring needs" they see in Kenya, even in their own immediate families: "It's terrible," says Naomi. They try to respond as they are able, but they can't do everything that is needed. "You feel helpless," says Abraham. "But you don't want to promise to do things you can't do."

Both Abraham and Naomi are blessed "with parents and siblings who are not the kind to demand." Because of that, says Abraham, "we have the freedom to choose what to do to help."



Naomy enjoyed spending time with her mother.
Photo credit: Simon Kioi

Highlights of the trip, and a dream:

In addition to seeing family, Naomi mentioned the weather – she was warm! She also loved being part of open-air evangelistic meetings in the marketplace, reaching out to people in the towns they visited.

"The churches organize for these meetings," says Abraham. They put up posters ahead of time, and then send people house to house to invite others to attend. "People come from far and wide," he adds.

They come to the churches on Sunday morning as well. "On motorbikes, walking – the hunger and desire for God's Word was really striking."

But this hunger is not enough. "In Kenya, as in Africa and in many developing countries," says Abraham, "Christianity is spreading fast – a mile long but only an inch deep." Churches are splitting "right and left" and the doctrines "are just wrong!"

The challenge is to create healthy church structures, to provide clear teaching, and to ground people in biblical faith. "Our dream is to be able to go back as often as possible to help Philip and Catherine organize seminars. They run RBM Ministries, which focuses on equipping church leaders. We want to help leaders be grounded in faith and develop structures to help contain the harvest."

To that end, Abraham and Naomi continue to equip themselves here. Abraham completed a Masters degree in practical theology with a specialization in missions last summer and is now working on his Doctor of Ministry degree, while Naomi is working on a Doctor of Education degree in educational leadership. Pray for them as they press on toward their goal.

Leadership Team Notes

Chilly Times in the Church Library
by Vicki Sairs

At our March 3 Leadership Team meeting, we focused on "big picture" issues (LCF's vision for youth, how we approach questions about women's roles in the church) as well as more routine housekeeping issues (which adult discipleship classes to offer, how to allocate the 2013 surplus funds). We kept our coats on and tried not to notice that we could see our breath; apparently our heating bills have been high, and it took quite a while for the newly turned on heat to reach the library.

We're excited about the great job Reggie Cooper is doing working with the youth and communicating with the parents. Some of the things we discussed: emphasize Scripture, prayer and outreach; have fun; encourage meaningful meetings and interaction; teach youth to integrate their faith with real life; model leadership; reinforce what Christian parents are telling youth at home.

Our discussion on women in the church was lively and precipitated by Rob's plan to preach on I Timothy 2: 11-15. He invited our input. We come from different backgrounds but found a lot of common ground. Things we want to see: an approach that looks to Scripture for light and healing; an environment at LCF which nurtures women and makes room for all their gifts (we agreed that we can do more in this area, for sure); an atmosphere conducive to searching God's Word together, with open minds and hearts. We were largely of one mind with Rob's thoughts on the passage.



Opportunities for ministry abound at this church in Nakuru.
Photo credit: Abraham Ndungu

An interview with *Amie Smith*

Interviewed by Candice Mast



Can you tell us a little about the place you grew up and your family?

I grew up in the quintessential small town of Pandora, Ohio. I have one sister, Annie, who is three years older than me. I had a very happy family life growing up, and I always appreciated my parents' guidance and love.

What's your favorite childhood memory?

Growing up, we shared a lot of fun memories together. My parents were always taking us on family trips. I had an awesome childhood growing up and I cherish every memory the same. My sister and I played well when we were little and we were very creative. We had over 100 Barbie dolls that we named, and each Barbie family had their own house and car (see picture above). We had my dad type up the families and their names on the computer and each house had their family name plate on it. We also had about 20 Polly Pockets and we of course named every one and our little village was name Pringles town. This was mainly because there was a Pringles can sitting next to us and we couldn't agree on a name.

It's pretty clear that you are head over heels for your husband. Tell us about him.

My husband and I met through his sister, who was my youth pastor in high school. We reacquainted when I moved to London in 2011 and we grew a quick mutual love for each other. When we had met before it wasn't in God's timing because he knew that we needed to grow and then, when we met years later, we both knew it was meant to be. My husband is everything that I have ever dreamed of and more. Nathaniel is my love and best friend. We share the same passions and enjoy doing activities together. As strong as our love is, nothing could have prepared us for our long distance separation. We have spent our first year together apart as my husband is actively serving in Afghanistan. I cannot describe to anyone my emotional state during this time. It has been the hardest trial that we have been in together and I don't wish it upon anyone. It was difficult in the beginning for us because we had to find a way to communicate and still go about a normal day without each other. Through it all, we have grown stronger and my love for him continues to grow. He is my love, my life, and my strength.



What is a "normal day" in the life of Amie Smith?

I always have to be moving and doing something, which annoys my husband. When I'm not working, I keep myself busy at home. Normally, at the beginning of the week, I make a list of everything that needs to be done and I strive to accomplish those tasks throughout the week. I love organizing and decorating, so most of my projects during the week consist of updating rooms, making crafts, and cleaning.

What is a dream you have?

I want to have a large family and live a long happy life with my husband.

And what are some things you enjoy doing in your free time?

During the winter I do a lot of crafts, which include making jewelry, scrapbooking, cross stitching, quilting, and making greeting cards. In the summertime I love being outside and I enjoy my time in the garden.

Are you outgoing or are you more reserved?

I think that I am more in the middle. I thrive being around people, but I also enjoy my quiet time.

What is something God is teaching you right now?

Patience!! This last year has been a big change for me and very hard. I left my job of five years to find a more positive career and my husband deployed three months after we were married. It's been a very trying year for me and I've had to learn through God to trust him and he will guide me where he wants me to be. I keep two verses on my desk that help remind me every day of his promises: Lamentations 3:25 and Isaiah 43:2-4.

In getting to know you, I've noticed you're a very generous person. What are some of the things you enjoy doing to serve God and others?

I love helping others. My mom always says that I have my Granny's heart; she was a very loving and gracious person. I always make sure I acknowledge people when they do a service for me. So, I make my own greeting cards so I have a more personalized way of thanking others. I also love to put together meals for people either as a thank you or a get-well to them. I enjoy sharing my gifts of love with others.

Anything else you'd like to share?

I would like to thank everyone for being so kind and welcoming towards me. I love my church family and I am excited to grow with each of you in community and fellowship. I can't wait for Nathaniel to meet all of you when he returns (hopefully in May)!

Thank you for sharing your life with us, Amie! We are really enjoying getting to know you!



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20 couples attended the Art of Marriage conference held at LCF on March 14-15. Following are some of their comments.



"We loved the Art of Marriage Conference. It really helped us learn how to communicate better. We feel that it brought us closer to each other and closer to the Lord. No matter how long a couple has been married, this conference would be beneficial. We especially enjoyed the love letter section!"

- Chris & Ashlie LeGrand



"I have never been taught that the relationship of a husband and wife is compared to Jesus and the Church until the last week or so. It has really opened my eyes a lot. When I reflect on how I have handled the role of being a husband it is very humbling as I realize that I have fallen way short! The Art of Marriage conference gave me a much better understanding of what God intends for me as a husband. I would absolutely, 100%, recommend this conference for everyone who is married, or is thinking about getting married."

- Jeremy Hisey



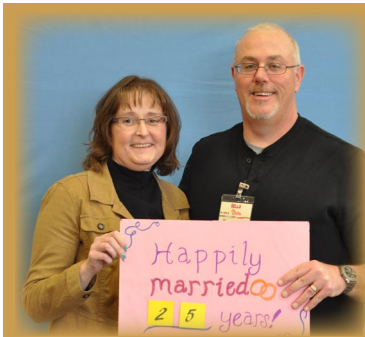
"We are so grateful for the opportunity to attend The Art of Marriage Conference. It was such a refreshing time as we focused on our marriage, even though we did not get to be there the whole time due to other activities. The time of vows and commitment at the end was a highlight for us as we looked into each others eyes and reflected back 9 years ago, when we stood before friends and family and said "I do". We are grateful that even in the midst of all the daily activities of life, we can still continue to fall in love with each other."

- Phil & Lucy Elfrink



"Even though we have been married for more than 25 years now, it was good to reaffirm some of lessons learned. I could look back and see how we may have handled issues better, and what to work on as issues come up going forward."

- Bob Zachrich



Thanks so much to each one who helped to host the conference and to each couple who took the time to participate.



The Art of Marriage conference actually reminded us how good our marriage really is. Of course we have a few things to work on, but we feel encouraged to keep on keeping on. One thing we took away from the conference was to work on intentionally making time for reading the Bible and praying together.

- Kris Freed



The LCF Connection

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What did you think? If any of the stories in this Connection sparked an idea or opinion you'd like to share, email us at connection@lcfweb.org. Editors: Doris Swartz, Trish Eaton and Candice Mast
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