

Karibu Kenya

Recently my wife and I journeyed to Kenya with three students enrolled at Martin Luther College, the WELS college of Ministry, and ten students from Wisconsin Lutheran High School. This was our first trip to Kenya, and the first group of teens to be received by the WELS' sister synod, the Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC Kenya).

While every new venture brings some anxiousness and concerns, our group could not have been welcomed more warmly. Whether it was at church on Sunday, visiting local schools, or shopping at local markets, everyone was happy to greet us by saying, "Karibu" (meaning, "Welcome"), a big smile, and often a warm embrace.

A Variety of Experiences

The main goals of the trip were to strengthen our bonds of fellowship, learn about Kenyan culture and ministry to Kenyan people, and to offer volunteer services as much as possible. The biggest opportunity for this came when we visited three schools throughout the week. The connection was made through LCMC President Rev. Mark Anariko and his wife, Grace, who teaches in Nairobi at Dandora Primary School. It was certainly a life-changing experience to visit these schools! We had only been in Nairobi for 36 hours when we first visited Dandora Primary School, a school of over 3,600 students from Pre-K to 9th grade! Our students had the opportunity to teach a Bible lesson, sing songs, and do a Bible-themed craft with students. We were then treated to a special program of songs and dances from various student groups.



This same program was repeated at each school we visited. Our students enjoyed this so much that we actually went back to Dandora Primary School a second time! At each school we were welcomed (and swarmed!) with many smiles and hugs, and so much love as we were sent on our way that most of our students left with tears in their eyes. It made for great conversation and reflection each evening!

Scattered throughout the week, we also had various Kenyan immersion experiences. We went on a safari at Nairobi National Park and visited an elephant orphanage. We took pictures on the helipad rooftop of the Kenya International Convention Center. We visited the Kenya National Museum, as well as local malls and markets. Each experience was an adventure as we saw the wonders of God's creation, learned about the history of Kenya, and interacted with many people of every background. We had lots of time to think as we sat in traffic for hours, as is inevitable for any visitor to Nairobi.

Highlight of the Visit

The greatest highlight of the trip was the opportunity to worship at Umoja Lutheran Church on two consecutive Sundays. The congregation welcomed our group with great love and joy, and our young people eagerly talked with and enjoyed time with

their young adults and young children. It was a very different experience to worship for more than two hours each week and sing ten hymns.



And yet, it was a very familiar experience as we followed the same liturgy (only in Swahili) and sang several familiar hymns. Personally, I had the privilege of preaching each Sunday and also distributing the Lord's Supper. What an extraordinary blessing to be able to worship with brothers and sisters across the world the same true God and confess our shared faith in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As a whole, the trip was unforgettable from start to finish, and every person in our group was touched to their heart by the warm welcome, the love shared, and our strong bonds of Christian unity. We look forward to sending another team again in the near future. In the meantime, we pray fervently for our dear brothers and sisters in Christ in Kenya. Whether we meet them in person face to face again or not, we

eagerly look forward to the day when our Savior in heaven tells us, “Karibu!”

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Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news, and receive updates. Learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people’s hearts at <https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>