

Warm Welcome

Missionaries Benjamin Foxen and John Roebke received a warm welcome to Tanzania last month, as part of One Africa Team's Four-Stage Outreach process.

We landed just south of the equator and felt the heat immediately. Visiting Tanzania at the end of its dry season is not the thing to do if you're looking for cool weather.

Missionary John Roebke and I came to Tanzania to continue discussions with a local Lutheran church body, the Africa Mission Evangelism Church (AMEC). We want to see if our church bodies share the same Scriptural beliefs and practices. We hope that one day we will be able to work together united in faith.



Ngarenanyuki AMEC Congregation

AMEC's leader, Bishop Baltazar Kaaya, met us at the airport late at night and showed us to our lodgings. The next day he gave us a tour of a couple of congregations up in the foothills of Mt. Meru. As we drove, he explained how the lack of rain had been starting to affect their crops. "We're praying for rain so that our people will have food to eat," he said. Eventually, though, the dry areas began to

give way to more green. Bishop Kaaya explained, “As we get higher on the mountain, we find areas that receive more rain.” It was quite a contrast.



Community leaders welcome a new clan leader

Later in the day, we had the opportunity to witness an interesting piece of culture. The elders of a village recognized a man as the new leader of his family. This was a celebration somewhat reminiscent of a new pastor's ordination or installation. All the other family heads gathered to speak their blessing upon this man in the presence of the entire clan. Many people were gathered. Though we felt a little out of place at this event, we were treated as honored guests. We were even asked to speak blessings of our own as if we were part of the clan.



Missionary Ben Foxen greets the members of Patandi AMEC Congregation

Throughout the week, the Tanzanian people continued to show us their warm welcome and hospitality. The church members gave us places of honor at their worship services. They made us feel at home with them, and that feeling increased. As the week progressed we saw familiarity in how the people approached the Word of God. In our daily workshop sessions, we explored that Word together. We used Luther's Small Catechism as a guide to see whether we were on the same page. We found a group of people committed to the truth and zealous to put it into practice.

AMEC is a group of almost 100 Lutheran congregations in northern Tanzania. Most of the congregations are concentrated near Mt. Meru, with a few more around Mt.

Kilimanjaro to the east. They are reaching out to other areas as well. AMEC's newest effort is in the coastal business center of Dar es Salaam. Islam is the dominant religion in this area, but the pastor there is working to bring the soothing peace of the gospel to the city's people. It is living water for thirsty hearts!



Almost 50 pastors and church elders attended the workshop

At the end of our time together, the workshop participants surprised us with another warm gesture. They presented us with shukas, the traditional garment of the Masai people. Many of the people in this area of Tanzania belong to this ethnic group. It was a wonderful gift that expressed a profound truth: they wanted us to be part of their "tribe." This is something that we want too! And what a blessing it was to see all the things on which our churches agree!

The weather isn't the only thing keeping Tanzania warm. The faith of these people is a warm welcome in this cold world. It is faith in the same God we serve and worship. We pray that our visits with the people of AMEC will continue to bear the fruit of a

common faith watered by God's Word.

Missionary Ben Foxen lives in Zambia and coordinates One Africa Team's Outreach efforts across the continent.

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>