

Hi everyone,

I pray your Christmas season is full of reminders of the One that was born. The whole season is really just a huge birthday party!

Around here there are very few signs of the season, or at least very few of the normal "western" signs. There are things that I've come to recognize as normal for the Christmas season here in Tanzanian village life. Choirs are beginning to write songs for the Christmas and I've helped the youth group write a skit from the Inn Keepers' view point.

As missionaries, we hold on to some of our own traditions and have put up Christmas trees. But I was chuckling as I went hunting for my tree in the tall grass while wearing sandals and a T-shirt, I had Anatory help cut down the tree with a machete and we used old bricks in a water bucket to stand it up straight. It has never been trimmed as those in the States would have been, in fact this one is nice and full but doesn't really have a single point on which to hang a star. But it is decked out with things I've collected over the past 10 years of Christmas here. I have some ornaments that I've brought from the States, thanks to After Christmas sales, and they are all plastic so if the cat knocks them on the cement floor, they won't break! I even have a couple empty Dr. Pepper cans hanging up as ornaments! I have some normal Christmas lights which only work with the generator is on and then there are some special LED lights that can work on battery power (assuming there has been enough sun to power the batteries). I even have a stocking hung from my chimney! My Tanzanian friends are in awe of the beautiful decorations, and all want their picture taken in front of the tree!

The villagers are preparing in their own ways. They have already started sprouting corn and millet to make their traditional party drink, Togwa. For those ladies that weren't on the ball a couple weeks ago, it's too late to sprout your grains and then have them dry in time. After drying them, they grind them and use that flour mixed with boiling water to make a sweet, inexpensive party drink. They may also be taking material to the seamstresses to have outfits made for the family. Others are hoping to buy some rice or a chicken for their holiday meal. But in the meantime they are mostly focused on getting their crops in the ground. It began to rain mid-November and now is planting season. Those who own cows and a plow are booked for weeks to plow fields. If they were fortunate enough to already have their field plowed you are busy planting corn and beans and sunflowers for next year. It is their livelihood.

For us, everything looks like spring. The grass is growing fiercely in the yard, the garden is starting to produce lots of great things, and flowers are in full bloom. I've begun to associate the smell of lilacs with Christmas as they are just starting to bloom outside my kitchen window. It is nearing the end of mango season for which we always look forward to.

Just thought you'd appreciate a glimpse of life in Tanzania at this time of year.

God Bless

Brook

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