

NEWS FROM RWANDA, July 2017
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Traveling without a Map

At the end of June I traveled with 2 colleagues from the Lutheran Church of Rwanda to Iringa, Tanzania to celebrate the consecration of a new bishop there. Our goal was to strengthen relationships across borders with fellow Lutherans. We were an American missionary, a Tanzanian missionary in Rwanda, and a Rwandan who grew up a refugee in Tanzania. With passports in hand we crossed the Rwanda/Tanzania border and traveled far – all the way and back without a map.

Since the days of Abraham and Sarah, God has called people to travel to new places and to new experiences, and to go without a map. The biblical story testifies that God creates a way and provides bread for the journey. I have been privileged to serve in Rwanda for the past 3 ½ years, and I have often been conscious of traveling without a map in my work with the LCR and with the YAGM program. But God has provided abundantly in this time, and has opened the door to mission possibilities. I continue to be amazed and graced by the wonder of it all: strangers come together across borders of nationality, culture and language, and God's Spirit makes new things possible. I have seen young adults from the U.S. transformed by surprising friendships. I have seen LCR evangelists and pastors excited to learn and grow as Lutheran leaders. I have seen relationships growing deeper.

Last week after returning from Tanzania I began the process of saying goodbye to this place I have called home for the past few years. I will be carrying a great cloud of witnesses in my heart as I pack up and leave Rwanda to return to the US on July 17. My good-byes are to Rwandan friends and colleagues, Tanzanians, Burundians, Ugandans, Americans, Dutch, Malagasy, South Africans, Lutherans, Anglicans, Catholics, Presbyterians, and Evangelicals. These good byes are to God's people in glorious diversity but what strikes me in light of recent border crossings is that we are "no longer strangers and aliens, but citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 3:19). I will miss this glimpse of God's kingdom on earth when I leave the remarkable country of Rwanda.

It has been a great privilege to serve as the first ordained missionary with the Lutheran Church of Rwanda these past few years. This work, this journey without a map has only been possible because I did not travel alone, but always with the support, guidance and prayers of so many. Thank you for your accompaniment in mission!



Rev. Janelle Neubauer (right) has been in Rwanda since May and serves as the new YAGM Rwanda Country Coordinator. She will welcome the 4th YAGM group to the Land of a 1000 hills in August.

The current YAGMs meet for their closing retreat on July 10 and depart from Rwanda on July 13.