

Message 7. Kenya Celebrations 20-28 Dec. 2023. Happy New Year!

Greetings from Kenya. This past week has been full of celebrations. On the 23rd of December, I prepared a spaghetti meal from scratch for Elizabeth and Marian, (not a common food here). On the 24th, I had tried to visit Margaret Amudavi, Jim Fussell, and another family near Ekwambwa, but failed to connect and attended Ekwambwa Friends Church instead. The Sunday School greeted me, and then during the Sunday service, a new child was welcomed into the Friends.



Four members of the family, with the new baby Irungu family: Marian front left, I and Elizabeth in back- Margaret in behind table

I was then invited on Christmas eve to join the Irungu family reunion (Elizabeth was one of 11 daughters). It was held at the Sports Club in Kakamega and to my surprise, I found Margaret, Jim and two others eating at the table next to ours!

On Christmas morning, I prepared a special breakfast of yogurt, fruit, and granola for Elizabeth and Marian. Then headed to Agneta's home and prepared a spaghetti meal for all 17 of the family gathered there. Many Kenyans were attending the choir competitions (singing Christmas Carols) on Christmas and others were enjoying competition matches of football (soccer).



Delicious red papaya at Elizabeths on Christmas Day.



Local women helping Agneta prepare food feast

On the 27th at Agneta's we celebrated the wedding of her son Abnah who had married Abigael officially during Covid, but wanted to have the traditional family celebration. I had to speak at the celebration, as It turned out that I had taught the mother of the groom at Lirhanda, and the mother of the bride at Malava. The first born of Abigael is Knapp, (my middle name), named after me. It was combined with a celebration of the completion of circumcision for their two young boys. (Knapp and Dufraimel) I was impressed that they included the two sons of Abner's deceased older brother (who are being raised by Agneta their grandmother). as they had completed their circumcision during Covid, and had had no celebration. There were processions to escort the bride and groom and the four boys, as well as the women of the groom's village/family/church welcoming the women of the bride's family/church/village. Over 50 people came to celebrate and feast together. Cakes had been made for the boys as well as one for the bride and groom. I joined the others in the family in preparing food (cutting up the vegetables and fruits, cleaning the house,

serving the many visitors. It was supposed to start at 10 am, but Abigael's family didn't arrive until 1PM.



Agneta's two sisters arrive Women with Agneta welcome visitors. Women escort the four young boys



Groom Abnah and bride Abigael

Cutting the cake.

Feasting inside the house.

I joined all the women who prepared the food (cut up vegetables, fruit, served the food, and helped clean up at the end. There were four groups of people eating, some outside, some inside and they ate basically all the food in the house. By 4:39PM when they began leaving, the rest of us were hungry and very tired, and were only left with some tea, plus a few crackers I had brought. The oldest man of the family feasted, but all the women and children missed most of the feast, other than getting a small bite of cake. In return we were given a cow and a goat.



Many leis were draped on the boys: Favour, Knapp, Dufraine, and Austeen Trees can be as colorful (Jacaranda in nearby village)

I celebrated New Years Day by attending Kimilili Friends Meeting. Just as the woman pastor began preaching, the rain suddenly downpoured on the metal roof and she couldn't be heard despite her shouting with a microphone. In response, we all began singing and entered the new year dancing with joy to have survived into the new year.

I then travelled back to Malava and will be leading a workshop of Africa Quaker Archives at FTC in Kaimosi this week, to teach how to conduct interviews, transcribe them, plus gather other important archival materials for the new archives. This will be my last major event before heading back to USA the 11th of January.

Thanks for all your support and prayers for the travels.

In gratitude,
Marian