

MERU & MULALA – OUR PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

I was asked to write a short narrative about my first impressions of our delegation trip to Mulala. My strength is not in writing...so here it goes. I selfishly went on this delegation because of the safari. It was a bucket list item and something I have dreamed of doing since I was probably in my teens. And the safari was every bit of what I hoped for and more.

So where does that leave the “mission” part of the trip? To be honest, I had some hesitations about it. I have done mission work- 14 months consecutive in Nicaragua. I have experienced the “do gooder” groups sweeping in to “help” for 2 weeks and then leave. I have seen other religion groups throwing free stuff at the people with the prosperity message (that by joining their religion, they will become rich). So naturally, I was hesitant. But this was a bit different, it was a partnership, right?

But a partnership in which one side sends down larger delegation groups and gives money to various projects to support doesn't appear to be much of a partnership, more like a sponsorship. And what happens when we can no longer provide the financial support due to our own financial issues within our church? So I ask again, what is the value of the partnership?

Well, I will tell you. We might be perceived as being financially rich (in comparison to them), but I would argue that they are by far the wealthier people when it comes to spirituality and being a Christian. Mission work should never be about going to a place to help and feel good about oneself...it's about walking the people's walk and learning the beauty of the culture and the people. We can't fix the poverty in Mulala. It will always be there. But going there to have a spiritual “reset”, that is the value of this partnership.

Pastor Debra gave a very meaningful (to me) sermon on the Good Samaritan. It really got me thinking about my own acts and life and what I was willing to sacrifice for others. Did you know that the Tanzania government requires that a minimum of 180,000ts (around \$78) be paid to teachers per month? In Mulala, they don't have that kind of money....so the teachers are considered “volunteers” instead of “employees” so that they can give them a stipend of only 100,000ts (around \$43/mo). How many people would be willing to accept a job that pays so little when they are able to be employed at another school with higher pay? And the classrooms in Mulala are one room, mixed of all primary ages, with little to no teaching materials. Who would choose that mission? Or Pastor Neema....who has to walk a long and arduous trek between the 3 preaching points in Mulala, along with visits to the shut-ins, working with the widow/widowers group, and much more....and hasn't gotten paid in over 3 months. Would you continue to do the work without getting paid?

It is because they have such a deep faith in God's love and good works. They truly believe that He will provide if they “come follow Him”. They are truly the better Samaritans. To watch this in person, to be there, to live it....that is the true power of the

partnership. To remind us (and me) what is truly important. If you have the opportunity-go! Not with the idea that you will somehow be “helping” them....this isn’t about be a white (or American) savior. They are the saviors to some extent...of our faith and our unconditional love. As I recently read in a blog about mission trips, “Jesus is there teaching you faith through the poor, who can’t do simple arithmetic but are more generous with their humble talents than you will ever be with yours”. What can we learn about our own dedication to Adoration, in keeping it financially viable? Do we sacrifice our wants to continue the mission of our church? Do we stop all of our partnerships (including those to Ascension Food Pantry, Divine Homeless Ministry and Mulala) to keep afloat? Will stopping those acts somehow lead to “saving” our church? One of my favorite sayings is “Live Simply, Love Generously, Care Deeply, Speak Kindly and Leave the Rest to God”. The people of Mulala parish reminded me of this phrase, embodying it wholly. Can we say the same about ourselves, our church and our community?

-Katie Schmidt



20th Anniversary Monument