

Prayer Letter

March 2008

Karubuni

Hello to all again!

I hope you all are doing well! I continue to miss everyone a great deal, but am quite excited about all the neat things I hear about going on in your lives and at RockPointe. Again, thank you so much for your prayers!! I am blessed immeasurably by all the letters (!) and packages that I

have received. I pray that God will bless you by allowing you to experience Him in a deeper way today.

I am finally going to take an opportunity to share with you a few things I have learned about animism specific to the Zaramo. I will share more concepts of this religion in future letters. The last half of the letter is updates on our “happenings” here!

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Important Info...
All packages that are mailed to the P.O. Box must be 8 1/2 x 11 or smaller. Letters are very much appreciated as I can read them over and over again.



Animism amongst the WaZaramo

It must be understood that the Zaramo believe and identify themselves as Muslims. By our theological terms they are actually folk Islam with a cultural tradition/daily practice/and preference for animism (ancestral veneration). We must also understand that their practice of this religion (primarily animism) is THEIR understanding of what Islam is and, therefore, believe themselves to be every bit as much a Muslim as someone living in Saudi Arabia.

Too, let me note that animism is NOT ancestor worship, but non-worship veneration – a practice of honoring/blessing and continued dependence/community with deceased relatives. There is a duality of their beliefs because they incorporate parts of Islam to their traditional religion, and therefore, a dimension of complexity exists in their conception of religion. But mainly their beliefs and understanding are formulated from animism.

Animism cont'...

God – a Supreme Being over all (my assumption is that they believe Him to be creator, judge, sovereign, all-powerful); not intimately involved in human affairs day-to-day; a bit abstract in their thinking; communicates directly with spirits (perhaps “higher spirits versus “lower” ancestral spirits) regarding the “living” realm

Spirit world & physical world – the Z’s do not differentiate between the two as we do; for our understanding I’ll continue to speak by differentiating the two. They see both worlds as one and interaction with what we consider the spiritual world to be a daily and on-going normalcy and need.

Life after death – the Z’s believe you enter the spirit world after you die. Depending on whether you live a good life (long life, were married & had kids, behaved/acted well towards others) and whether your family & friends give you a good “send off” (were present at your funeral, gave a proper funeral, appeased your spirit before/during/ and immediately after your body was buried & awaiting burial) or not will dictate that you become a good spirit or evil spirit. You will then interact with the living in as much as your living relatives will call upon you for your blessing or advice in whatever need they have or for your curse upon their enemies. If you are a good spirit that is remembered well, and appeased on a regular basis you will continue to act towards your relatives as a benevolent spirit interceding on their behalves both in the spirit and physical worlds. However, if you are forgotten or your relatives refuse their offerings to you it is ex-

pected that you would act adversely towards them.

The living will expect that as they honor and remember their deceased relatives that these will speak well of them in the spirit world (to other spirits and through them to the Supreme Being) and prepare the spirit world to be in favor with them when they die, or to bring them into good standing in the spirit world. I do not as of yet understand what they believe to be the ultimate outcome or goal of this preparation. In fact, it is possible they have yet to explore this issue in their own minds from which to draw a conclusion.

Sin – the Z’s do not have a word for sin in their language; for this they borrow from Swahili. The ill deeds they commit in life are considered mistakes (for which they do have a word) and truly only count if they are

caught. Their mistakes are offenses against them in regards to their relationship with their deceased ancestors and their desire to bid them well in the spirit world. They do not view their mistakes as being committed against God and deserving of eternal punishment as we understand this issue. Therefore, they do not adhere to or are not aware of original sin and its consequences established by God.



Relationships...

This month we will be starting a group narration for at least 6 Zaramos!! The Lord has continued to draw people to Himself and these are ready and desiring to study the Bible. We are using a Bible teaching/evangelism tool called Firm Foundations that uses a chronological story telling method to teach the Bible beginning in Genesis. As mentioned above the Z's do not have a concept of original sin so it is prudent that they

understand God's teaching on this first. To begin evangelism with the sacrifice of Christ and God's offer of salvation through that sacrifice simply would not make sense at this time.

Tim approached Dulla asking if he would consider hosting the study at his home and Dulla accepted enthusiastically – this will place the study more in their cultural setting and hopefully will attract more Z's.



Dulla on the left

This month has also been quite difficult for us as we have witnessed many health problems/injuries in which little can be offered for those hurting, and the passing of two grandmothers we knew. Of the two I knew Bibi Souda (Saow-ooda) the best and talked with her on a regular basis. We visited often the week she was sick, but unfortunately she was in a coma and unaware of our presence and prayers. It is possible she passed of cerebral malaria, but her family felt certain she was cursed and sought only help from the local medicine man. She passed on Saturday and we attended her funeral Sunday; she was an unbeliever.

Funerals – Bibi was given an Islamic funeral. Her body was prepared at her home and placed in an open carrying box draped with a linen cloth. The men formed a big crowd and took turns running from the back to the front to carry Bibi; only men are permitted to at-

tend the burial (done far in the woods). The women look on from afar as the men exchange carrying Bibi until they are out of sight. The Z's are not culturally permitted to show pain (including during childbirth) so at a prescribed time women family & friends gather into a large room and wail and grieve the loss of their loved one.

One of the Christian women amongst the Zaramo suffers from epilepsy. She has seizures and then falls into her open fire at home and unfortunately did this again. When I examined her she had three burns – both arms and her chest. She had a significant burn on her left arm and all three wounds were infected and bad skin was attempting to form over this. The local clinic offered her no assistance. We cleaned her wounds, started her on antibiotics and sent her to Dar to see a missionary doctor we know.

Praises

- For a cat! It's a HUGE blessing!
- I'm seeing a bit improvement in my critical spirit
- The narration group!
- RP vision team coming in June

Prayer Requests

- The narration group
- My young neighbor Dulla & Momma Tedi (our homestay host & village elder) would come to the narration
- Encouragement for the team – many are feeling deflated right now
- Wisdom for the RockPointe team coming in June to evaluate and make decisions for future mission endeavors



Kilimanjaro – Kili for short – in her cereal box

Our rat eating machine...hopefully!

On a much more cheerful note, we have received a cat! We now have a rat eating machine – that is when it grows up.....the cat is only 4 weeks old 😊 But, we'll be persistent.



Kili (R) & brother Mac (L) in a play Ark.

*Pray for wisdom,
courage and
strength.
In Him,
Monica*

**Monica Miller in
Tanzania, Africa**

EFCM
Monica Miller
P.O. Box 63367
Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, Africa

Email: monica.miller@aimint.net

[http://mysite.verizon.net/
resxpvo/monicamiller/](http://mysite.verizon.net/resxpvo/monicamiller/)



My friend Amina at her birthday party. She let me put up the Happy B-day greeting in the back.



We recently were able to help Dulla mud wall his house. Jeremy is carrying mud from the pit (in background) over to the house.



Doing my part to mud Dulla's house.



Our team weekend retreat in the mountains. A much needed rest!!

<http://mysite.verizon.net/resxpvo/monicamiller/>