

St. Stephen the Martyr Meru Visit notes, Fall, 2023

A group of 4 traveled to Meru Sept. 27-Oct. 10, 2023. The 1st 5 days were spent in the Usa River area staying at the Rest House.

Loved staying at the Rest House and Flora's hospitality. Billing issues have been resolved. We were able to use a Wi-Fi hotspot provided by the RH, they also have a generator that provides electricity when power goes out.

A Diocese driver was hired to take us to our arranged visits including:

- Makumira Secondary School and Nkoranga Hospital
- Arusha-ELCT Bookstore and Cultural Heritage Center, official welcome with the Bishop & staff
- Usa River Rehabilitation Center & Secondary School; Mshikamano Voc. Center
- Usa River Cathedral worship; Mlimani Coffee Processing Center & farms

Warmly welcomed at each stop, we brought gifts/donations from SSM to share. Repeatedly were "thanked for choosing to visit us." Visitors do have choices and we were grateful to see a variety of places connected to the Diocese and our Partnership Committee

*Note: **Sept. 28 is a National holiday** which caused a change in some visits.*

We used Destination Tanzania for a 4-day safari to Tarangire NP and Ngorongoro Crater.

A wonderful experience, initial communication issues with DT resolved, hackers are a pain!

We spent the last 6 days in the Eastern District staying at Rafiki Guest Hostel.

The Hostel was well located for us, needs some maintenance which we gently shared with District Pastor. Wifi in this area is iffy even for those with International service.

- We visited the Tumaini Women's Group next to the Hostel.

A driver hired by our partner parish Mbaaseny drove us to visit:

- Andande Pre & Primary School
- Leguruki Health Center and our welcome event at Mbaaseny
- The DME Singing Festival at Imbaseny in the Southern District
- Home visits, Canaan Kindergarten, East Meru Community School, Leki Secondary & Vocational School
- NIA and SILK Coffee Processing Centers and farms, Pastor Nnko's home
- Farewell party at Mbaaseny

Very meaningful home visits where we brought groceries and a quilt. Warm gratitude for "choosing" to visit this area. We were greatly assisted in our time here by 3 of the Shanguya

children (college aged) who traveled with us, translating and helping with protocols (and finding bathrooms!)

Drought in these areas has lessened but remains harsh in the Southern and Northern Districts.

We flew KLM via Amsterdam. Our return flight was delayed by 3 hours which made our layover in Amsterdam only 45 minutes!

We used Coach USA bus transport each way. Going down is a breeze but the pickup spot at O'Hare is now at the rental car area requiring a tram ride. With lots of luggage that was a challenge.



View of Mt Kilimanjaro
in the Northern District
(we were facing Mt
Meru!)