



Communicating with Friends in Tanzania

Please keep these suggestions in mind as you write letters to students and friends in Tanzania:

Frequency: We hope you'll write your student 1-2 times each year, and especially send a letter and small gift whenever our church sends a group to visit. Postage for a simple 1-2 page letter to Tanzania is \$.90. We have told students that we expect them to send at least one letter to you each year that includes their grades. We've asked them to have their headmaster also sign the letter as way to let the headmaster see their writing, know that they have accurately stated their grades, and that a letter has been sent. Some members of the Maasai tribe have not learned to write in English; if a letter is written in Swahili, Pastor Paul and Ruth Edstrom of SOTV are able to translate.

Return Address: For privacy, we suggest you use the SOTV address on all of your correspondence (12650 Johnny Cake Ridge Road, Apple Valley, MN 55124 U.S.A.). When letters are received, we will keep a copy for our student files, and note any requests for additional support or special family issues (births, deaths, marriages, etc.). The church will contact you to let you know that a letter has arrived.

Gifts: Remember that our primary mark of friendship is relationship, not 'things.' The students are extremely grateful for the support you have already given in the form of a substantial scholarship (which equals the amount of the average annual income of one person in Tanzania!). Please do not send money, ever. Talk to Pastor Diane or Kirsten Levorson about requests you receive for money, or if you receive letters from other people you do not know. Additional gifts should be small and inexpensive and are not necessary for each letter you send. There is always a risk that gift items will be taken before they reach the student. When a SOTV group is going to Tanzania, we may advise you on what to put in a gift that would mean an equitable balance in the gifts for all students.

Some ideas for simple, inexpensive gifts:

- Journal or notebook
- Stickers (nature, animals, Bible verses)
- Inexpensive watch
- Cross necklace
- Postcard of our state or area
- Current family photo
- Swahili-English dictionary or phrasebook
- Bookmark
- Pens
- Solar calculator
- A greeting card or item with a special quote (such as "God loves you")

Cultural Sensitivity: Remember that the students generally have never been to a movie theater, watched TV or a video, been to a shopping mall, seen snow or frozen lakes, owned a bicycle or car, been to an amusement park, gone on vacation, seen an ocean. They do not own toys (unless homemade) or books. They live in homes without running water or electricity, walk everywhere, spend a great deal of time everyday helping with household chores (carrying water from the nearest well, cooking) and farming (tilling fields by hand or behind a pair of oxen). They have no access to computers until and unless they study at a university.

STYLE: As students learn English in Tanzania, they are taught to use a formal style of writing that has largely gone out of style in today's informal American culture. As a sign of respect, we suggest you use a



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more formal style when you write to your students and friends in Tungamalenga Parish. Friendly Letters have these parts -

Salutation: It begins with the word *Dear*, followed by the name of the person who will receive the letter. The salutation in a friendly letter is followed by a comma. (,)

Greeting: The Christians from Tanzania always offer a greeting in the name of Jesus Christ, such as:

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ!

Praise the Lord! Kamwene! Bwana Asifiwe!

[Note: 'Kamwene' is a welcome greeting in the tribal language Ki-hehe, spoken by many of the people of Tungamalenga (but is probably not familiar to those who are of the Maasai tribe).

'Bwana Asifiwe' is a Swahili phrase that is used by anyone who speaks in front of a group of Christians. It means, "Give praise to God."

In Christ I greet you.

Greetings in the name of Jesus our Savior.

They often also speak a word of hope that you are well, of greetings to your family, and that you see God's blessings in your life.

Body: This is the place where you will share information and ideas with the person to whom you are writing. Think about the person you are writing. What interesting, fun, and exciting experiences have you had recently? Which would they enjoy hearing about? Keep in mind the great difference in our respective personal wealth of possessions. Focus less on "things" and more on life experiences.

Remember to answer any questions you may have been asked when your friend last wrote to you; and show a genuine interest in them, by asking one or two questions about what is happening in their life.

Remember to start a new paragraph each time you begin to write about a new idea or subject. Proofread your letter and make any corrections or changes you need and then you are ready for the...

Closing: This is a time to speak a word of blessing to your friend. What do you pray for their lives? Is there a favorite Bible verse you might want to quote? You could even send a blessing in Swahili! *Mungu aku Bariki* means "The Lord Bless You."

End your letter with a phrase like: *Your friend*, or *Sincerely*, or *In Christ's peace/love/joy*, etc. Be sure to capitalize the first word and follow the phrase with a comma. Add your signature. We suggest you sign both your first and last name until you have established a closer relationship.