Greetings from Tanzania! You will be receiving this letter in February. I am writing it in early January. We have entered the year 2020. Happy New Year! Both a new year and a new decade have begun. May the year 2020 and the decade of the 2020’s be times of growth and renewal for you and your loved ones!

For the past 20+ years, there has been a Christian conference in Kenya, called Renew Conference. It takes place from 28 December to 1 January every year. I attended Renew in 2016 and 2018 and was again blessed to attend in 2019.

Renew gives missionaries and others in the area an opportunity to enjoy a time of renewal through Bible teaching, times of corporate worship and fellowship, and small group sessions that can be healing, challenging, equipping, and encouraging.

Every missionary with whom I have dialogued about conflict within a mission team has had personal experience with this challenge. The fact that conflict occurs in everyone’s life was reflected in how well attended the session on conflict resolution was. The principles of conflict resolution that were discussed are: 1) No personal attacks, 2) You’re on the same team, not enemies, 3) De-escalate, 4) Take responsibility for your own part in the problem; 5) Seek understanding. While several other principles are helpful in resolving conflict, these are a good starting point.

Another session that I attended was on change management. This is something that is of particular interest to me because I have seen a great reluctance on the part of many of the people I taught to embrace change and take ownership of the opportunities presented to them. Most of those folks know quite well the material that was taught but choose to not apply it. I am thrilled to now have “tools” to assess why an individual is reluctant to make changes in livestock management and “tools” to use to facilitate change. How effective these “tools”, which were developed for application to change in the western corporate world, will be in a third world country with very different cultural norms is yet to be seen. I am eager to try them!

My time spent at the Renew conference has helped me see better ways to do development work than what I have done and seen done in the past. This is 2020. My vision for my future work is not yet “20/20”. But it is a lot better than it was! “20/20” vision brings to mind the song, I Can See Clearly Now, by Johnny Nash:
I can see clearly now the rain is gone
I can see all obstacles in my way
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind
It’s gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day
It’s gonna be a bright (bright)
Bright (bright) sunshiny day

I think that these lyrics fit my situation quite well. I can see a way forward past previous obstacles into a more productive future!

As we together seek to serve our Lord in 2020, I find new hope for better sustainability of livestock programs that I will be a part of in 2020 and beyond. As we go through the year 2020, may our spiritual sight be “20/20”. Here are some passages of Scripture that talk about seeing (emphasis added by me):

“Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” (Ps. 34:8, NASV)

“For with thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.” (Ps. 36:9, NASV)

Please pray:

• that those who don’t yet know the Lord will have “20/20” vision to see the goodness of the Lord and that they will see their way out of darkness into His marvelous light
• that God will use me (and you!) to share His goodness and to point all to His light (Christ is the light of the world.)
• that I will move forward in faith even when I don’t see His plan

Partnering with you in service to God, because of His great love!

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