

Stephen Hatch

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The call in action

Dear friends,

It has been an interesting few months, where it feels like everything is going wrong, mainly because many things decided to break in quick succession. My car broke (the key wouldn't turn to start the engine) – fortunately the local shop owner called a mechanic who bypassed the problem until I could get the right part ordered and fitted. My oven broke just at the time I was asked to bake cakes for graduation, but has now been fixed, my laptop will work for 30 minutes and then it tells me there is a fatal error with its hard drive, my iPad won't charge properly and now my fridge has broken too. Please pray for God to provide solutions for all these things as he did with my car.

My first week as teacher on duty finished without any real excitement, but roughly every three months it happens again. The second time I was far busier (by my calculation I worked a 114-hour week), with two classes still at the school, and two classes arriving during my week not to mention an interview day for our preform 1 course (pupils due to start form 1 in January). Based on the feedback I received from school leadership, everything was fine and was "very efficient", thanks in part to the school prefects who took their responsibilities seriously and could be trusted to follow instructions and to lead other pupils. The week did finish on a low though as I sent one class to the village church (a different class goes each week) with the instructions to all come back together – so when all the girls returned but only half the boys, I was not happy. It turns out another teacher saw them coming back and gave them a job to do, but didn't tell the teacher who is considered responsible for all pupils (the teacher on duty, i.e. me). All I could think was, What if they wander off and get seriously injured and no one knows where they are? While I have assurances that it won't happen again, part of me does not want to send any pupils off-site again.

It took seven months from the time my carpenter started the work (sadly, his wife had been ill and in hospital), but I finally have kitchen cabinets and can actually cook in my kitchen for the first time in about three years.

Pupils are supposed to wake up early in the morning to do some private studying before lessons start, what we are calling morning prep time (I fundamentally disagree with it: coming from a Western background, I think it's more important that they get enough sleep). As you can imagine, pupils aren't always very



Name: Stephen Hatch

Location: Kilimatinde, Tanzania

My call: Providing education to those who would otherwise have none.

My role: Working as a maths teacher and head of the science department, and supporting the headmaster and chaplain at St John's Seminary



How I had to start my car while I was waiting for it to be fixed (twisting two wires together and hitting with the third)

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good at getting up very early (4:00am) to attend. So it was decided that different teachers would wake the pupils up each morning, and I was given Thursday along with another teacher. After the first two weeks I had a few pupils that were still not getting up after we rang the bell, and their excuse was “we didn’t hear the bell”. So I thought, How do I make sure that they hear me next time? My solution: stand outside their dormitories, banging two saucepan lids together while singing (badly and loudly):

O what a beautiful morning
O what a beautiful day
It’s time for morning prep time
Pupils should go right away

No one has claimed they didn’t hear since.

I was asked by the school matron to help take a pupil to hospital (this happens sometimes, normally when the school driver is busy with the school car), but this time while waiting I saw an interesting poster regarding COVID-19 vaccines. I had been asking other teachers about vaccine availability and my current information was that only those over 55 or health workers were eligible, but I could see no mention of this on the poster. I asked the head doctor if it was available for everyone and was told “Yes, come during the day”, so I did and have now had the J&J vaccine for COVID-19.

We have reached exam time again, which means that the school computers cannot be used as they are kept in the physics lab for safekeeping, and this is out of bounds during exams. However, I still had IT lessons so I split the class in two, gave them cards with letters, numbers or symbols used to make formulas in a spreadsheet and we had a competition to see who could make the correct formula quickest. I have never seen them so competitive. I saw some other teachers passing by my class, I think to see what the cheering was for.

Most years at Christmas I invite for dinner any teachers who might otherwise be alone (any new teachers are supposed to be around), but this year all the new teachers have family somewhere nearby so there seems to be no need for this. At the same time, this year we may be keeping some pupils behind for extra tuition, depending on their average results over the year. For this reason, I am thinking of arranging a Nativity play (possibly in Swahili), as they have never seen one before, and possibly of preparing some food and activities to take to them to make their day special. But of course, this depends on how many pupils are staying behind and what plans might be made by the school.

Stephen



Photos from top to bottom:
My kitchen before the new cupboards; my new kitchen cupboards; getting COVID vaccine; pupils making formulas using cards

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If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

You can give to Stephen at:
churchmissionsociety.org/hatch

Contact details:
mapi314@live.co.uk

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