

Missionaries: Larry and Jane Kies

May 2010 Newsletter

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Dear friends and family,

(Jane) One recent early, chilly, misty morning, I got up early to walk around the quieter parts of the university campus, and was touched to come across a number of students praying quietly, or out loud, having their “morning conversation” with the Lord. I began to walk along side one of my former students, Watete, a pastor from the DRC (Congo), who is about to graduate. I asked him what God had been saying to him that particular morning.

He told me that after reflecting on the Easter story, he imagined the women approaching Jesus’ tomb, wondering how on earth they were going to manage to roll that huge stone away to get to the body of Jesus. He thought about how he often worried about “huge stones” in his present situation. God had told him that morning not to be anxious and fearful about his problems as the stone had been rolled away.

I thanked God that morning for the many students I have known like Pastor Watete, who have taught me what it means to trust God daily for courage and strength and their “daily bread”.

(Larry) Yesterday while I was supervising a group of final-year agriculture students writing final exams, I said a silent prayer of thanks for those who have helped move these students’ ‘stones’ and made it possible for them to celebrate, with proud families, their approaching graduation day. Have you ever felt overwhelmed by such great needs that you thought ‘what is the use of trying to do anything?’ Let me assure you- the scholarship funds have impacted lives and built faith. So...many, many thanks for those who helped.

As we get ready to celebrate the graduation of our son, Ben, we give so much thanks to God who has brought him from attending a small mission school in Zimbabwe to being a Harvard graduate. There have been a multitude of large stones on that particular path, but God has faithfully provided in every way. We know exactly the feelings of thankfulness and pride AU parents are experiencing!

One of our most recent challenges was finding an empty and affordable seat on any plane flying via southern Africa- the soccer World Cup is being held in South Africa. The games start on June 12, so many flights have been booked for months. Jane and I booked our flights in January (we will spend a few days in Iowa as well), and flights arriving one week after our June 2nd return were over double the cost!

At least visitors coming from the US don't need to worry about changing money- we are still using the US\$, as well as the South African rand. Most stores are now fully stocked, or nearly so, although prices are higher than they were ten years ago before hyper-inflation began. One curious aspect of the economy is the scarcity of coins. Lines ('queues' in the British English common here) at grocery store check-outs are often held up as customers return to the shelves to find articles that will bring their purchase to an even dollar. Lots of people just throw in enough 5c candy or bubble gum conveniently located next to the till. (Good business for dentists!)

One particular highlight last month was attending the funeral of retired UMC Bishop Abel Muzorewa who had also briefly served as prime minister of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia' .

The affection of the UMC members for their departed spiritual leader was obvious. Particularly moving was a video played near the end of the service, with Bishop Muzorewa singing 'God Be with You Till We Meet Again' (he had recorded it shortly before he died). An altar call was given during the service, and many went forward to receive, or rededicate their lives to, Christ. The pastor-in-charge looked up and "invited" the bishop to watch the exciting events that were taking place below at his funeral! May we all have such confidence in God's grace that we can face death with no fear!

Other Campus News

Trenching is being done to lay a fibre-optic cable to campus. Hopefully, AU will soon have the fast internet connections we need to function as a modern university, including expanding web-based instruction and satellite campuses in other countries.

A container shipped by the Hyattsville MD UMC brought valuable

additions to the already-excellent AU library, as well as useful articles for the AU Farm- and lots of fencing and other supplies for the Small Farm Resource Center (Dream Farm) which will help us reach out to small farmers better.

Farm News

The rains in our part of Zimbabwe were disastrous this year- most farmers will harvest very little, if anything. The AU farm was rescued by the new irrigation system- we are busy harvesting our corn (maize), soybeans and the various research and teaching plots. We are still expanding the system to allow us to grow more vegetable crops.

In 2011 we hope to build more farm workers housing units near the pumping station. Let me know if you are interesting in forming/joining a Volunteers in Mission team to help with the construction.

FAMILY NEWS

As I write, Ben is not sure what he will do after graduation. He has had at least two firm offers, and is awaiting results of another interview. Nice to have options!

Pule's computer engineering program is going well. He will attend summer school and work part-time at Iowa State.

Carly, 15, was very busy with track last term- she loves to keep active, and is thankful that her ankle has healed enough to allow her to participate fully.

Michael, 10, is happy to have gold fish in his room and has been helping with the laying hens at the farm. He entertains us with the particular smells, sounds and sights that accompany the job!

Please pray-

- For all recent and soon-to-be graduates, that they may find satisfying jobs that allow them to use their God-given skills
- For continued reconciliation in Zimbabwe- and justice for all
- For those you know who are feeling overwhelmed, that they might find help in 'moving the stones'

Thank you for your love, prayers and support!

Yours and His,
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