

Dear Family and Friends

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you, he will never leave or forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged. Deuteronomy 31:8

After spending the New Year with the family in Lusaka we returned to Mwandu to get Ellie ready for school. After seeing her off in Livingstone we returned to Mwandu where we prepared for the opening of the new school for the children of Mission Staff and then worked at tidying the hospital and Mission Grounds for the visit of the Western Province Minister who was coming to inspect the new Oxygen Plant.

The staff at the new school have been helped greatly by Moira Kerr, a former Nurse Schoolteacher from St Andrews, to think about and take measures to make imaginative play a greater part of the at present rather formal early years curriculum. This has been done by regular Zoom meetings. The Methodist Church generously gave us a grant to help towards the cost of purchasing toys and teaching and learning equipment. Another Zoom meeting was held between the Secondary



Another piece of good news was that our proposal to the Czech Embassy for ICU bed headboards and a suction machine has been successful. We had a visit two from long time Irish partners and supporters from the Arthur Cox law firm. They were looking at water projects, their rice growing project at Luanja and the Clinic at Masese. On Call for Africa have funded a refurbishment and Ryan, Amelia and Alex agreed to fund a patients' shelter to replace the ex-army tent they are now using. Work on that will begin in May. The visit was a good time to network with Luanja Rice Growers and the Simalaha Peace Parks.



We now are trying to grow rice in Mwandi.

We met with a real snag in mid-January when the RBS froze all our accounts Current, savings, and Mission Projects Accounts. They said that as we are no longer UK residents and paid tax in Zambia, so we were no longer entitled to hold a UK bank account. As you can imagine trying to sort this out from rural Zambia was quite a nightmare. We have opened an international account with Stanbic which will allow us to keep our savings in Sterling. The next challenge is getting RBS to move our money that they are sitting on to Standard Bank. They say it can take up to 60 working days to do the transfer! The Church of Scotland have been very supportive during this stressful time for us.

From the layers we are getting roughly 90 eggs per day and there is a ready market for them within the Mission. The fish are also growing well though we had a hiccup where we lost over 100, due to a lack of oxygen in the water. But we have solved that with daily change of water and the pump acting as an aerator at night. We are also using the water we take off to irrigate two rice paddies we are trying rice-growing as an experiment. Our duck and drake have also produced 4 ducklings.

We are still getting a few orders of blocks from the outside for a public toilet in Mwandi and to complete the work being undertaken at Masese. David, Butuku and Wise have been busy clearing and pegging out the new X-ray suite. We have received donations for 2500 blocks which should cover the foundations and slab. So the brick yard is working on them. We have had the sand and cement delivered as they are locally sourced but are awaiting a delivery of quarry dust. The tipper truck had broken down and has now been repaired. The state of the road to Kazungula continues to deteriorate. The 140km journey to Livingstone now takes almost 4 hours. Work to grade it and improve the drainage has been promised to begin with the end of the rains.

After a good start the rains have tailed off and we have not yet reached 500mls. Cyclone Freddy is blamed for keeping a trough of high pressure over Central and Southern Africa preventing low pressure rains from the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone reaching us. There is a concern over the harvest. The maize of those who planted early is struggling badly and drying out before the cobs are properly formed. The Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit has stored some relief maize in the old Church building.

Both Ida and I have been appointed Western Presbytery Convenors for Health and Education. As part of the decentralization process and to encourage greater Church ownership Health & Education Committees have to be established in the consistories that have schools and clinics and these have to report to a Presbytery Committee. They are there to support the institutions with resources and repairs and work alongside the authorities with regard to staffing and standards. During our time at Synod we were responsible for consulting and drafting the terms of reference and the purposes and responsibilities of these committees. So it is poetic justice that both of us end up being responsible for the implementation!

At Mwandu, the Rev Davies Sikazwe has been transferred to Choma, his wife was promoted to Deputy Head at Njase Girls School, and the Rev Sheba Kilalo has taken his place: she is here with her husband, a teacher, and their toddler son. Deaconess Kabamba who served at Chaplain here, has moved to Mwenzo Girls. Rev Ezekiel Siwale is taking over from her.

The first of the year's visitors arrived on Sunday the 19th of March from Independent Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, Alabama, who are long-time supporters of the work here at Mwandu. It was good to meet Melissa, the new Missions Reverend, and catch up with dear friends, Tommy Thomson and Phil Collins as well as meeting a number of the group again.

It was also a delight to receive a copy of Charles Newsome's, "Just Say Yes" an autobiography focusing on the enduring call he has had to service in Zambia. book and both look forward to reading it through. We have just dipped into it so far.

We have had Dr Peggy Schreiber staying with us for a few days at the same time. She was on a few days off from her cycle tour from Cairo to Capetown. She is being sponsored and hopes to raise funds for the hospital She reached Livingstone and set off again on the Thursday.

The Birmingham group settled in fine with the usual a tour of the Mission and village walk. Ida is helped to get the ophthalmic area under way. The group visited the sheltered Workshop on Wednesday afternoon



On Sunday 19 March, Ellie Was baptized at Chengelo. We were unable to be there, the time needed to travel and the distance involved made it impossible. But Ellie was well supported as she made this important public confession of her faith, by good friends, Ian and Alison Richardson and Fraser and Sharon Swan. Ian and Fraser baptized her and Fraser's daughter, Charlotte, was baptized too at the same time.



On 29 March just before we left for Scotland, Catriona gave birth to Hugo, our eighth grandchild and second grandson. Despite hospitalization with an infected umbilical cord, he has put on weight and is healthy and alert. He is easygoing and feeds well.

The next day we flew back to Scotland for 2 weeks. Keith's father had been admitted to Forth Valley Hospital, he had a fall at home, caught Covid in the hospital, which became pneumonia. My brother Graham, and his wife Irene did a great job looking after him for so long. Another brother, Gordon, has recently suffered a number of debilitating TIAs, so he, too, was in hospital. We stayed with our daughter Kirsten and son-in-law, in Lenzie for most of the time.

Stuart picked us up from airport and took us immediately to see Dad. We were fortunate to say farewell as he passed peacefully away in his sleep later that night. Gregor was able too to travel from North Wales and administer the last rites. We put him to rest on Friday, 14 April at a very warm and moving family service. Gregor officiated and all the generations spoke in thanksgiving and celebration of his life. Despite the circumstances it was a joy to be together with the children and grandchildren from Scotland and Wales and also to visit dear friends in Fife, Pennicuik and Edinburgh

We also enjoyed Eric and Helen's wedding at Lochearnhead. It was a beautiful day with the mountains and trees reflected on the still surface of the loch; the ceremony was held outside in the warm rays of the Spring sun. Eric is Ida's brother. It was good there too to catch up with Ida's side of the family. It was special to meet up with our nephew, Roy and niece, Ruth who flew in from Ireland and New Zealand

It has not been an easy time for us recently, neither in our personal lives nor in our work, but we know that God's gracious, loving and all-wise will shall be done and out of all the seeming turmoil and uncertainty we will have a deeper peace and a more enduring patience.

With our love

[Keith, Ida](#) & Mubita