



Ten Years in Africa!

"I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great assembly." Psalm 40:10



Our first Christmas together

Dear Friends and Family,

Thank you for making our 2007 Christmas season such a joyful one! Knowing that we have so many loved ones committing us to the Lord in prayer made our first Christmas together really special. We enjoyed receiving Christmas cards and pictures from many of our friends and family. We spent the holiday with the Hammond Family of Frontline Fellowship, and enjoyed great fellowship and lots of food- which we're still working off.

The New Year is always a time of contemplation as we consider what we've done with the time we've been given. Looking back over 2007, I have feelings of both joy and regret as I remember my good decisions and my... not so good ones. This New Year, more than ever, has been a time for me to reflect on the past, as January 2008 marks **10 years in Africa!** I can hardly believe that I've now spent a third of my life as a missionary in "the dark continent". When I consider the Lord's grace and faithfulness during these years, I can appreciate this humbling adventure. He has brought me through many difficult times and patiently carried me through many hard lessons. He has been my Rock, my Comforter, and my ever-present Help.

Early Days

"The heart has reasons that reason knows not of." - Blaise Pascal

Young people often happily and zealously rush in, heart over heels, where a wiser, more experienced person would exercise more caution. When I first came to Frontline Fellowship, I was 19 years old and full of youthful enthusiasm; on fire for God and ready to turn Africa upside down. Fortunately for me (and Africa) I was surrounded by many wise, experienced missionaries who helped shape me into something the Lord can use.

From the very beginning I was eager to share God's Word with the people of Africa. During my first Great Commission Course training camp, I enthusiastically jumped into Muslim evangelism, a new experience for me. With the boldness that only naiveté can engender, I strode directly into a mosque in the Malay Quarter... during Ramadan (a Muslim holiday celebrating the "revelation" of the Quran). Another evening, a few months later, I was doing street evangelism in a very seamy area of Cape Town, an activity that requires great attentiveness to personal safety if you want to make it home in one, undamaged piece. In a moment where my attention was, well, not where I was going anyway, I rounded a corner and found myself walking into a gunfight. By God's grace I survived to tell the story, and learned that there is a time and place for everything under heaven!



Outside a mosque in Cape Town, 1998



Dinner is served; Sudan, 2002

Challenges in the Field

Missionaries in Africa face many unique challenges. Disease, pestilence, extreme temperatures, deplorable road conditions (including land mines), language barriers, cultural barriers, border crossings, bush food, bugs, primitive living conditions, the nationals' dependency- these and other difficulties come together to produce this tragic statistic: most missionaries in Africa last only 2 - 4 years before giving up and returning home. I have seen my share of these challenges and, if not for God's grace, would certainly have added my name to the list.



On a drip for Malaria, Sudan 2004

Being a missionary has taught me a lot about perseverance. I recently experienced my 11th case of malaria- a very memorable disease. Malaria feels like having brain surgery without an anesthetic while being beaten with a rubber hose- a real fun ride with a potentially fatal end. I've travelled in war zones, been arrested with trumped up treason and espionage charges, experienced heat stroke, was nearly shot, and maneuvered down land mine strewn roads. I've ministered in Sudan, the land of 140 languages, and I've learned to be "wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove" at borders.

Ashley is also learning to appreciate missionary challenges in Africa. On our recent trip to the States, she nearly lost it when someone told her that the roads in Phoenix, AZ were "really getting bad." While Ashley has seen some bad roads, she hasn't even been to northern Africa yet- they take potholes to a whole new depth.

It can also be challenging to be the only foreigner within a hundred miles. Due to the questionable methods of the UN and various NGOs, many Africans see foreigners as genies ready to grant their every wish. It's a bit difficult to blend in too; at 6'2" and obviously American I stand out... noticeably. Ashley was amused to hear in markets, "Hey! Chuck Norris!" The people seem to think that we white guys all look alike!

When these conditions and challenges combine, you can experience really interesting situations. I was once driving with a Sudanese man, my guide and interpreter, through war-torn Southern Sudan. We came to a fork in the road and I asked him which way I must go. He didn't understand. I said, "Left or right?" He said, "Yes." Hmmm. I went left. He instantly responded, "No, no, no!!! Very dangerous road!!!" That particular road was littered with land mines. When bad road conditions meet language barriers, the results can be deadly.

**Right: It's got great fuel mileage!
The Nuba, 2003**



The missionary field, however, is not without its "perks"; after all, the retirement benefits are out of this world! As I travel across this diverse continent I get to see many of God's wonders- His wildlife enjoying the African bush, His incredible art in the African sunsets, and His love radiating from the faces of His people. I enjoy visiting Victoria Falls on my way through Zimbabwe and stopping at the different animal reserves. (Not that you



**Ashley enjoying a rainbow in the mist.
Victoria Falls, Zambia 2007**

need to go to a reserve to see the wildlife; they love to hang out by the roads during dry season and play chicken with unwary travelers!) While Africa is a challenging place to live and work, I wouldn't trade it for an exotic sports car on the Autobahn. I thank the Lord for faithfully working in me, and allowing me to be a part of His work in this amazing continent.

Learning and Growing

One of the most important things I've learned over the years is the value of God's wisdom. If we don't lean on His understanding, we will fall flat, making a big mess for ourselves and those around us. In the field I've learned how to meet and minister to people where they're at, addressing their issues and needs. I've learned to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance in speaking to people and helping them overcome their difficulties. I've learned to be flexible- sometimes the sermon or lesson I've prepared doesn't fit the immediate need; sometimes, often actually, the whole plan gets thrown out the window at the last minute. I've



Interviews with suffering Christians in Sudan, 2005



learned to expect surprises and delays! I'm also learning how to help the Africans overcome their physical needs.

As I teach about poverty, suffering, and God's provision, I'm able to help them make better lives for themselves and their families.

The mission field often presents many opportunities to experience personal suffering; this is an excellent, if painful, way of growing in the Lord. Only by putting my hope in Him and trusting that He is sovereign have I come through

the tough times. While the challenges themselves can be draining, the physical, spiritual, and emotional stress can easily become overwhelming. Missionaries fight in the frontline; a place where battle wounds sometimes have to look after themselves and relief doesn't always come when it's perceivably needed. There have been days when I thought I couldn't handle it anymore, wishing I could go home or throw myself into the nearest croc-infested river. But God's strength is perfect and He is faithful even when we are faithless. If anyone wants to know if God can be trusted, I can give my testimony: I'm still here. Although I haven't had everything I wanted, He graciously supplied all that I needed to sustain me during these 10 years in Africa.



Gospel Recordings Training, Sudan 2003

Looking Back

My work here has often taken me across Africa- seventeen times, in fact, covering more than 144,000 miles (and those are African miles) by road and an inestimable amount by air. I've made many dear friends throughout the continent, and have been able to minister in places where the Gospel has never before been heard. I've delivered over 28,000 Bibles in many different languages, some of them to villages that had previously only had one or maybe even a small portion of a Bible until then. Often these Bibles had to be taken through hostile borders where their discovery would have meant imprisonment or worse. Through distribution, training, and personal evangelism I and my teams have taken over 353,000 tracts and Gospel booklets into Africa. I've been privileged to work with many incredible, godly people in the field, some of whom walk many, many miles to carry out evangelism and minister to God's people, often in a variety of languages!

In the beginning I was doing a lot of film evangelism and Gospel Recordings training. Language Recordings produces Gospel messages and Bible stories in many different languages on tapes. They also produce field tape players (can be operated by hand crank) which we have distributed to the many hard working, African evangelists we work with in the field. After my training with Frontline Fellowship was completed, I became involved in their school, Christian Liberty Academy, in Southern Sudan. I eventually became the Headmaster, and enjoyed teaching a variety of subjects to Sudanese children of all ages. This was a stretching experience for me, as I had never before taught in a school!

As time moved on, I became more and more involved in leadership training. Through preaching, teaching, Biblical Worldview Summits, Great Commission Courses, leadership conferences, and discipleship opportunities, I began to teach leadership skills, Biblical principles, and much needed practical application techniques to pastors and teachers throughout Africa.

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a missionary over a period of years is seeing the growth in the people I've worked with. It's amazing to see people I brought to the Lord as young men becoming ministers and evangelists. Seeing people take the lessons that they've learned and multiply them by teaching others shows me how the Lord can effectively use His people in Africa.



Christian Liberty Academy Student Body Sudan, 2002

Recent Adventures

In October and November Ashley and I travelled around doing leadership training and literature distribution in southern Africa, mostly in various parts of Zambia. We were able to spend a week in the rural town of Chipata, ministering to a pastors' fraternal. I've worked with this group several times before, and was very impressed with their progress. We were able to discuss issues relating to the Covenant, Law and Grace, as well as practical applications of God's Law in the body of Christ. My interpreter in Chipata was a church elder named Stanley. I was amazed by his growing grasp of many of the more complex issues regarding doctrine, as well as practical applications of God's Word. Several times he answered for me during the question/answer sessions- which is great as he's able to explain things in a way that his people can relate to. I left a variety of materials with him to be studying, and I hope to return soon and work with him further. It would also be great to involve other gifted leaders and speakers as I work with men like Stanley. The Lord can use men like him to make a tremendous impact on the Church and the Kingdom of God.



Stanley takes a turn at the board.

If the people of Zambia can grasp and apply God's Word, they will take their country for Christ- and there has never been a more crucial time than the present. Zambia is in the process of rewriting its constitution; a process that will make or break this country that has

only just begun making baby steps as a Christian nation.

We were able to work with quite a few new church plants during this trip. Most of them meet in small, thatched huts or covered areas. They sit on clay bricks or logs, and many of the village children and animals wonder in and out throughout the service. These young churches are often very enthusiastic to learn about the Lord. However, there is usually a dire lack of Scripture available to them. Often the only Bible available is the one the preacher has, and he may only be in the area of the church plant on Sundays! As we revisit and work with these people, we hope to take them Bibles in their own language.



**Timothy preaching to a young congregation.
Zambia, 2007**

Halfway through the field trip the air conditioner on the truck gave up its last breath. Fortunately, the rains had just started, so as long as we stayed in motion, we were fine. However, driving in the cities became grueling for Ashley; in the middle of the second trimester she was feeling the heat, especially when we had to keep the windows up (to keep people from stealing out of our vehicle at traffic lights)! Our little one behaved remarkably well throughout the trip. She wasn't impressed with the driving, but could be placated with Daddy's classical music!



**Monica Amanda Keller in profile
at age 23 weeks.**

Daddy's Little Girl

We praise the Lord for the continued growth and development of our little girl. After a recent checkup we learned that she is doing well... and is already well on her way to having Daddy wrapped around her tiny, unborn finger. On our recent trip through Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi we were frequently exposed to malaria and other African diseases- in fact I got Malaria for the 11th time! Throughout the trip, this new Daddy very thoroughly and enthusiastically kept Ashley under mosquito nets and chased her with bug repellent. The Lord, in His grace, protected both Ashley and little Monica Amanda from contracting anything harmful. We look forward to welcoming our baby in the first week of April. (Ashley has officially started the countdown.)

Looking Forward

As we look to the next 10, 20, 80... or however many years the Lord chooses to give us, we rejoice in the many opportunities we have to serve our loving Father. We are very excited about being a young family, and look forward to all the joys and challenges to come as we learn to be godly parents. Next month we will be returning to the USA to have our baby and prepare for future ministry. As we seek to serve the Lord through our work in Africa, we hope to further develop our leadership training programs, particularly with church leaders and school teachers. There is a great need for both discipleship and practical training on many levels. The situation in Zimbabwe gradually worsens, and we pray that we will be able to continue ministering to our brothers and sisters in Christ in that devastated country.



**"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever; with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations."
Psalm 89:1**

We give heartfelt thanks to those who are contributing to the memorial fund in honor of our sister, Amy Keller. As this fund grows, we hope to purchase a new- much needed- field vehicle.

Thank you so much for your continued prayers and encouragement. We love hearing from you! Please continue to pray for us as we serve the Lord together in Africa.

Please pray for...

- A safe journey back to the States and an uneventful delivery.
- Stanley and the pastors' fellowship in Zambia as they grow in knowledge and wisdom.
- That the Lord will continue to show us how best to serve Him for the expansion of His Kingdom.
- Bibles for rural churches.

Pro Rege,

Timothy & Ashley Keller

The Kellers c/o ITMI, P.O. Box 7575, Tempe, AZ, 85281, timothykeller@hotmail.com or ash.keller@yahoo.com

Gifts may be sent to: The Keller Household, c/o ITMI, PO Box 7575, Tempe, AZ 85281

To receive a tax receipt, cheques should be made out to "ITMI" and designated to "The Kellers".