



## The Journey Home

“The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” Psalm 34:10



We are so happy to be back in Africa!

Dear Friends and Family,

Your prayers and support continue to be an encouragement and blessing to us. The last several months have been both joyous and stressful, as we've reached Zambia at last and encountered many challenges along the way. The Lord has been incredibly gracious to us this year, even preserving our lives in times of unexpected trouble and illness. Reaching our new home in Kabwe, Zambia after 18 months of preparation and Container work has been a joy beyond words.

### The Journey South

As soon as the Container was sealed and shipped in August, we set out from US soil and headed for Africa. I left several weeks ahead of Ashley and Monica to finalize housing arrangements and organize the purchase of a vehicle. When I reached Kabwe I found that our house was nearly finished, just needing some finishing work such as ceiling fans- the best way to keep away mosquitoes. Hannes and Christel van Jaarsveldt, our friends and landlords, were planning a trip

to South Africa. They offered to let me drive one of their vehicles down and then use it to pick up Ashley, Monica, and our boxes of household items in Cape Town (another 1800kms across the continent from their stop in Pietersburg). I gratefully accepted this, as I hadn't yet been able to find a vehicle that suited our needs for ministry and family.

We found that the roads going south through Zambia and Botswana were in really bad condition. After one particularly long and jolting day's journey over potholes with some road between them, we stopped at a gas station to sleep for a few hours. I was awoken early to the sound of gunshots. Since I didn't see any commotion nearby, I assumed it was a shabine (bar) fight and went back to sleep. At five am we prepared to continue onwards. We noticed that no one was around, which is very unusual for an African pit stop/village. Shrugging our shoulders, we men headed to the bushes to take care of morning business, while Christel went to the gas station. Nearing the building she heard urgent whispers from the huts nearby, "Inside! Go inside! There are lions in the bushes! Go INSIDE!" We were humbled as we discovered that the Lord had preserved us through our sleep and through our morning preparations (out in the open) from lions only meters away. Lions are generally afraid of people. Any lions coming *into* a populated area are looking for breakfast and are open to stalking the two-legged kind. We are extremely grateful for the Lord's safeguarding, watching over us even as we unknowingly walked in the bushes near the lions.



Praise God for his protection from hidden dangers

### Delayed and Decided: Our Vehicle

I reached Cape Town in early September. Ashley and Monica had been staying with our good friends, the Hammonds. When I arrived I had a really bad case of the flu that was turning quickly into a sinus infection. After I got over that, we planned on staying in town for a week or so to pack our personal belongings (stored for us by our friends, the van der Merwe's, during our time in the States), pick up supplies that are not readily available (if available at all) in Zambia, and reconnect with our friends in Cape Town.

Throughout the drive from Kabwe to Petersburg to Cape Town, I noticed that the truck's engine wasn't running quite right. I called Hannes and he put me in touch with a friend near Cape Town who could organize a mechanic. We were hoping it just needed a new hose or work on the injectors... but no such luck. During a trip into the Botswana sands earlier in the year, a poorly repaired intake pipe had sucked sand directly into the engine. The whole thing had to be stripped down and rebuilt. At first the mechanic told us this would take a week or so. However, as they took the engine apart, carefully cleaning each piece, it became apparent that several other major parts, the diesel pump and turbo, also needed to be rebuilt. Add to this the pace at which work progresses in Africa (hakuna

matata) and the days turned quickly into weeks. We were told, "by Monday", "Thursday", "definitely by Wednesday", "just a few more days". We eventually gave up hope of reaching Zambia in September. This delay, while frustrating, was also a tremendous blessing as we were able to spend much more time with our friends in Cape Town. It also allowed us to more thoroughly prepare our trailer for the long road home and join in on outreach and ministry opportunities there in town.



**Praise God for this new vehicle!  
It meets all of our ministry and family needs.**

for transporting Bibles and supplies) and much roomier for passengers, not to mention car seats, Bibles, and ministry supplies! The Toyota already has most of the field kit installed already including the bull bar, tow package, alarm immobilizer, and decent off road tires. With a few additions like a long range tank (sometimes you have to drive *quite* a ways before refueling in Africa), new shocks, and maybe a snorkel, this truck will be perfect for us (ready to go anywhere). The best part: the Toyota has already been imported legally into Zambia and registered here as belonging to a nonprofit organization. This means a *tremendous* savings of both time and money. I just have to transfer it into my name and re-insure it.

In the end, it was unquestionably the hand of God that brought the whole situation to a happy conclusion. As the cost of repairs mounted, Hannes and Christel began to wonder how they would afford them. We realized that, with the sale of our FJ Cruiser in the States, we were able to purchase the vehicle and share the repair costs with the van Jaarsveldts. I also still have enough in the vehicle fund to finish kitting the Toyota out for the field. God has indeed been good to us in providing an ideal vehicle that will bless our ministry and our family. Through the sale of the Toyota, He provided the funds needed for the van Jaarsveldts to purchase a vehicle more appropriate for their ministry needs. We praise God, for His plans are clearly above ours, and bring together His people for His purposes.

### **The Road Home**

With the completion of the repairs, we quickly packed our bags and prepared to leave Cape Town. We spent Thursday, October 15<sup>th</sup> packing our boxes into the trailer and preparing to leave. That evening I backed the truck up to the trailer, only to discover that the hitch ball had been stolen!! The only shop still open at that time only had the full hitch kit. Our 4am departure plans dashed, we went to bed praying that someone would have a hitch in stock (not always the case in South Africa). After a lot of phone calls, I managed to find a hitch for sale not too far away that I thought would work. However, it was just a bit too big. Rather than continue a possibly fruitless hunt through the city, I decided to grind out the hitch connection and make it work. Several hours and a lot of grinding later, we were able to leave the Cape... about 8 hours later than originally planned.

Because the engine was newly rebuilt and we were towing a heavily loaded and highly stacked trailer, I drove slowly. We planned on staying with some friends in Bloemfontein (normally a 10 hour drive from Cape Town), and hoped to reach there by 11pm or so. At midnight and still 300kms from Bloem, we realized we weren't going to make it. I pulled to the side of the road in an area that seemed unpopulated, and we got a few hours sleep. We took turns holding Monica in our laps in the front so that she could get out of her car seat. The truck was too fully loaded for even a toddler to find a place to stretch out and sleep! We woke early Saturday morning and continued on to Johannesburg, reaching the small-holding of some friends by dinnertime. It was a wonderful thing to step out of that truck knowing that we would be having a good night's sleep in a real bed! While in Johannesburg I had the truck serviced in preparation for the African roads ahead. Having travelled them recently, I knew what was in store. We were also able to fellowship with



**Road conditions in Africa are often perilous and leave something to be desired (understatement).**

some very good friends around the city. Many of these Brothers and Sisters have put us up for the night (and put up with us) as we've passed through the area. We are very grateful for their friendship and encouragement.

Our next stop was Pietersburg, the town we're planning to return to for the birth of Baby 2. We stayed with some friends at their guesthouse which, conveniently, is a five minute walk from the hospital! We were able to meet with the doctor and have Ashley and the baby checked out before continuing to Zambia. Dr Henn was very encouraging and recommended that we return to Pietersburg in mid-to-late December to await the birth.

Next: on to Zambia! Leaving South Africa is always an interesting experience. Aside from the border formalities (which are no joke when you have a trailer full of goods), there is a striking contrast between sectionally-civilized South Africa and rural, or perhaps better stated: the rest of, Africa. Imagine walking out of Los Angeles (not too dissimilar from Johannesburg) and facing *rural* Mexico. In the case of Botswana, this is huts and donkeys, dust and potholes, women carrying heavy loads on their heads, and half naked children.



Monica: "Duck!!! Wack, wack, wack. Duck!!"  
Mommy: "No, Monica, that's an ostrich."  
Monica, after a thoughtful silence...  
"Duck, wack, wack, wack. Duck!"

Our journey into and through Botswana was fairly uneventful. Monica saw her first wild ostriches, which she called "Duck!!" Later we slowed to show her an elephant at the side of the road, but it turned out to be a whole herd of elephants... and they weren't pleased to see us, so we quickly sped onward. We had to drive over many kms of *really* bad road, but we were blessed with a truck that ran beautifully, air conditioning, and the breathtaking Botswana bush. That night we were surprised to find lodging with hot water and a shower!! What a treat after a long day in the truck!

We left bright and early the next morning, hoping to reach the Zambian border in plenty of time to process the import paperwork for our supplies. Several hours down the road, we found that one of our cell phones was missing. This was a huge disappointment as it had been purchased while we were in South Africa to accommodate the Zambian internet/email system, which is facilitated through the cell phone service. It also contained nearly all the pictures we'd taken so far on the roadtrip. Whether it was stolen or left behind in the haze of early morning packing, we aren't sure. At any rate, it was gone. We reached the Zambian border and crossed over the Zambezi River by ferry. This portion of the river is notorious for great numbers of crocs and hippos, fun to watch... from a distance! Crossing that river by ferry is very good for your prayer life.

As we again worked our way through border formalities, we were hopeful that we would actually get through quickly. Unfortunately, it turned out that the people who processed our paperwork when we left South Africa did not do it properly. It ALL had to be redone. We ended up hiring a "clearing agent" to help us deal with the Zambian taxes and import law, attempting to reduce the import taxes as much as possible. Most of our goods were used, but the Zambian government taxes them anyway: tax on top of tax, on top of tax. If there is one undertaking that the Africans have down to an art form, it is that of taxation. We ended up having to pay far more than originally anticipated to bring our things into the country. However, we are thankful that the Lord had provided the funds for us to do this, and we are incredibly grateful to have our dishes and books and clothes! By God's grace, the paperwork was finished just before the border closed (literally within minutes.) If you get stuck between one country's border and the next, you are stuck in No-Man's-Land, Africa... not a place you want to be, especially with your family, overnight. We were grateful to be through the border and spent what remained of the night in Livingstone.

Saturday's journey was only about 450kms. However, it was 450kms of exceptionally poor road. With our loaded trailer and a pregnant mommy we had to take it really slow, sometimes only 15km/hr, over the potholes and badly ripped up sections. When we finally reached good roads again, we found that, in all the shaking and jolting, the spotlights had actually been shaken off the bull bar and lost on the road! I am just glad the baby stayed inside Mommy where he belongs. We stopped for the night at a farm and coffee plantation in Mazabuka. Our friends there have blessed us on many occasions with a good night's sleep and some of the most amazing coffee we've ever tasted anywhere.

### **Be it ever so humble, there's no place like HOME!**

On Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, for the first time in our married lives, we arrived HOME. What an amazing feeling. We spent the following week unpacking our boxes and setting up the house. Ashley has been adjusting to the new kitchen and food situation. We have been blessed to find a greater variety of foods than we first expected (including cheese!) Ashley has been adjusting to cooking out of one pot, and has gotten used to using the Zambian staple foods (tomatoes and rice at this time of year). We hope to purchase a stove/oven next year, which will greatly increase the variety of our meals. We praise God for his grace and provision, giving us a home to live in, a community to serve, and a true love for this beautiful country.

### **Container Update**

As we write this newsletter, the Container has arrived in Lusaka, clearing the final stages of customs and importation. Please continue to pray for the Lord's hand to be with us as we wrangle our way through this process. Once the paperwork is finished (which,

in Africa, can take anywhere from a few days to a few months) we will be able to open it up! At that point we will be able to ascertain the condition of the materials inside and begin distributing them. Please pray with us that the materials and books have made it here safely and unmolested. Until then, we will continue to enjoy camping out in our house as much of our furniture is in the container or in the process of being built.

### Monica's Great Scare

We had only been in Zambia for a week when Monica became very ill. After a few days of low fever and lethargy, she began to faint and quasi-seize. Each time she would stop breathing, needing resuscitation, which was extremely scary. If Hannes and Manassi, one his employees, hadn't been near her during one of her first episodes...I don't know what would have happened... we praise God they were there (we were on the other side of the yard, just out of sight). I think the week that followed was one of the scariest, most prayerful weeks we have ever experienced. After multiple visits to the local doctor here in Kabwe, he decided to try giving her a very strong, broad spectrum anti-biotic. Dian, the little boy who lives in the same compound, had come down with a throat infection; the doctor suspected the cases were related. By God's grace, the antibiotic worked very quickly, and Monica recovered within a few days. Because there are no scanning or lab facilities here in Kabwe, we have been unable to have her tested to make sure the fainting/seizing wasn't more than some kind of really nasty bacteria or parasite. When we return to South Africa for the birth of Baby 2, we will see if we can have Monica checked out further, making sure that there is nothing wrong inside her head or infecting her blood. Please keep her in your prayers. We very much appreciate the encouragement and support we received through emails and calls from many of you during that time.



Anyone for a pie?

### Not too long now!

We would appreciate your continued prayers as the birth of our son draws near. Lord willing, we will be driving back to Pietersburg, South Africa for the birth. (At least Timothy is hoping this will be the case, as the alternative is that his midwifery skills get put to the test! Picture: Timothy delivering his own baby, in the back of a truck, on the side of the road, in the middle of Botswana, watching for lions over his shoulder, and comforting a toddler in the car seat... not an option he is planning to pursue.) The medical facilities in Zambia, even in the capital, Lusaka, are just not equipped to properly handle, well, most things. Secondary infections after giving birth are very common here, a concern which quickly made our decision to travel to South Africa for the birth. We plan to reach Pietersburg by late December, anticipating Mr Keller's arrival to be near the first week of January. Some of our friends in the area have offered to let us stay with them while we wait first for the birth, then for the US Citizen Born Abroad birth certificate, and lastly for the passport to be processed (which, thankfully, takes much less time through a Foreign Embassy than it does in the US!) Ashley has been experiencing a lot of severe back and hip pain over the last few weeks, making her life and tasks much more difficult and painful. Please keep her in your prayers.

### News from the Field

Don't forget to follow us on our website and blog: [www.KellersC23.com](http://www.KellersC23.com) and [www.KellersC23.com/blog](http://www.KellersC23.com/blog). You can also read more about the Container Project in the recent ITMI newsletters, linked through the About Us page on our website.

Pro Rege,

Timothy, Ashley, Monica, & Baby Keller

Please pray...

- For the Lord's hand and protection to be with our Container and the materials inside.
- For continuing opportunities to share the Gospel of God's grace and Law with the people of Zambia.
- For the continued good health of Ashley and Baby 2, a safe journey to South Africa (still pregnant!), and a quick, safe birth.
- For Monica, that her fainting spells were cured with the antibiotic, not caused by something worse that may still affect her.

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" (or "Keller Container" for Container shipment funds)