

# The Kellers' Prayer Letter

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## With Heart and Soul and Voice

“And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation”

Luke 1:50



Spending time with family is the highlight of our furlough. The kids prayed for snow the entire time we were in the States. Finally, in February, we got a freak, Arizona snow storm and Freddy's taste for snow was satisfied.



As 2013 comes to a close and new adventures peek over the horizon, I find myself in that twilight state of savoring the past and looking forward to the forthcoming year. God has carried us through a very challenging season of life. It's been one of those years that is both happy and sad. We had an amazing trip to the US- in which God pulled off a totally impossible Container Project! We loved spending time with family and the kids can't stop talking about the snow. In April we came home to Zambia and found unexpected, new opportunities to reach out, teach, and make disciples right here in Kabwe, practically on our doorstep. God is using our family here in Africa in ways that astonish and humble me. The kids are happy, healthy, and growing like tropical weeds. God has blessed us so much this year.

At the same time we faced a lot of personal challenges. Our lives were badly shaken when my grandmother unexpectedly passed away early this year. A few months later (after returning to Zambia) I lost a long-loved cousin to drug overdose. Tim's mom has been battling cancer most of the year. And frankly, the poverty and social devastation in Zambia was difficult to face upon our return.

The kids are big enough now to notice the vast difference between life in the US and life in Zambia. They see the poorest and sickest and ask incredibly difficult questions. Monica, at 5, is a little thinker and sees the beauty and the filth. She wants to rationalize. She wants to understand. I want to explain. I want to help her love these incredible people and to have heart-felt compassion for the lost and hurting. And that should be no problem because we're missionaries, right? We've got this whole Africa-thing figured out. A long time ago. No problem.

HA!

We have never been so challenged as parents. In the missionary-career world we talk about “raising third culture kids”, “cultural assimilation”, boarding school vs local, indigenous schools, learning the language, protecting our children, and preparing them to be independent should they choose to return to the mother ship without us when they're grown. However, I think one of the biggest challenges we've encountered is giving our children a love and appreciation for the people we serve... wherever they may be. Teaching them that service is a pleasure, giving is good, and sacrifice is beautiful. We teach them to love Africa because Christ loves us and gave himself... for Africa.

But what on earth does that look like? “Mom, why doesn't that man have legs? Or food?” Gulp. “We need to pray for that girl so her sores (AIDS) can be healed. God will heal her, right, Mom?!” Gulp. “Why does that boy wear pants with holes? Where's his dad?” Gulp, gulp. “Mom, does God love Africa?”

Until recently our kids had limited and controlled interaction with the harsher aspects of the world outside our home. We held their hand, we explained. We served, they watched. Now that they are bigger we are carefully and anxiously



Life is beautiful and life is appalling.



stretching their wings and giving them opportunities to reach out in their own creative ways. But it's scary. Letting Monica talk to the creepy, crazy guy at the market and spread child-like love in her wake is scary. I want to grab her and stuff her back in the car. I know who these men on the corner sell at night. And yes, I mean *who*. Watching Frederick give his trade-mark bear hug to a little girl dying of AIDS is enough to bring me to my knees. I wish he didn't have to see it. I'm glad he barely understands it. But more than that, I'm thankful that God is making all of this easy on me. My kids love

people. They don't care if they're scarred, scary, diseased, bald, or creepy. Not yet. Kids get it: "red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight."

We're starting slowly with them, mainly doing things they enjoy. Close to home we have Stanley, a deaf, Zambian friend who helps around our Mission House. The kids are slowly learning a little sign language so that they can convince him to help them with their chores and adventurous

**Doing outreaches with the kids along is much more challenging! But it's worth it. I love watching their hearts turn toward these wonderful people.**



endeavors (figures, right?). I'm surprised to see that they interact almost intuitively with him! I've also started taking them along to do Bible lessons & play therapy at a school for disabled children. They weren't sold on the idea until they realized this was all about love and fun. They're becoming more involved in Bemba-speaking environments. I'm getting them to exercise their Bemba in the market and street. Hopefully soon they'll be more fluent. But for now they're learning the importance of communicating in someone else's language. I also encourage them to watch for needs as we go about our day to day life. Of course, that sometimes backfires... "Mom, why is that guy still begging on the corner? Doesn't he want to get a job??" Another lesson for another day, my girl....

I don't know if we're doing it "the right way". I'm still not sure if they'll be scarred for life. But believe you me, I am down on my knees pleading with God to work in their lives and give them love for service, compassion for the horrific, and a heart for the lost.

I know many families around the world are striving to develop Christ-like hearts in the children. Let's pray together toward that end- a generation that cares for others because Christ gave Himself for all of us.

Thank you *so much* for your prayers, encouragement, notes, financial support, and friendship. This has been a good year and a tough year. We returned to Zambia with hearts full of joyful expectation that God would use us. He's done that. Thank you for standing with us and helping us serve the Lord in this way.

Merry Christmas!!

Love,

Ashley, Timothy, Monica,  
Frederick, & Olivia Keller

Please pray for...

- God to give us wisdom as we nurture and train our children
- The Lord's grace in using us to make a difference for Him in Zambia
- Tim's mom, Dallas, who is undergoing treatment for cancer and the outlook is somewhat uncertain.
- Our family's health as the rainy season has arrived.

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