

The Kellers' Prayer Letter

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In Touch Mission International

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Moving Right Along

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

Psalm 127:1

The end of the rainy season in February brought a big transition for our family- we moved! As the lease for our rental was ending, we rushed to get the Mission House in as much of a “livable state” as possible. By God’s grace I managed to get enough done that we were able to move in on time. We were extremely blessed with the help of many friends who volunteered to help pack and move everything. There are, however, a few things I still need to build- like a kitchen. At the moment we have a section of chipboard for a countertop and a big bucket outside for washing dishes. I’m also chasing up the myriad of “small” things that come with a house that’s about 90% done: missing windows to replace before winter, another bathroom to finish, plumbing leaks increasing by the day, no cupboards or storage (ok, that’s not fair, we have quite a few suitcases), plus when we moved in we discovered that a host of swamp roaches took up residence before we did. We are still in the process of giving them their eviction notice. There are a lot of them so it requires a lot of eviction spray.



Building the Mission House has been a challenging experience for me. I’m thankful for God’s provision and grace.

We are grateful that the Lord provided a much-needed bigger space for our family and ministry. This place really is amazing. Our room and the kids’ room are actually two *separate* rooms now- yay for the small things. We

also have enough space to facilitate guests, training functions, and short term teams of people. We have a big yard that we’re already turning into an orchard, garden, chicken coop, and, with the help of the kids, a bike circuit.

We are grateful for God’s provision of the funds and time to get the Mission House to the point where we could move in. We are also very grateful that no serious injuries occurred during construction.

It has taken three years to get the house to this point. We decided from the beginning that we didn’t want to sacrifice our other ministry projects, so we had to balance working on the house and pursuing the needs around us. We sincerely thank each of you who have prayed, supported, and

Mission House Fun Facts:

- We paid cash for most of the project. Literally CASH. It took 87 withdrawals from the atm- and the biggest bill available was worth about \$10.
- We used 13,728 bricks, most of them hand-made & wood fired
- The construction process required 298 bags of cement and those had to be mixed with sand and water *by hand*,
- Our house is coated in 84 gallons of paint... including some lead paint. It was unavoidable. This is Africa. (So if you ever visit us, please do not lick any of our ceilings or any brown surfaces.)
- 132 pounds of wall putty. They say paint covers a multitude of sins? I think they meant wall putty.
- From construction to move-in we utilized 5,632 hours of building labor.
- Enormous amounts of coffee were consumed throughout the entire project.

* some of these numbers are educated guesstimates. I’m pretty sure you could throw on a few more pounds of wall putty and still be accurate.

encouraged us through this project. Don't stop yet though- we have about a year's worth of work ahead of us before we can really unpack and use the whole space. We continue to ask for your prayers over the construction, as well as for God's guidance as we put the Mission House to use for Christ.

Curriculum for Christ

At the beginning of the year, I began working with a group of teachers at Operation Mobilization's Teacher Training College (TTC). Usually when I do Teacher Training courses it involves short "seminars" in several areas of the country. Because the seminars are limited to one or two days, I focus on the Biblical Worldview and why that's essential for godly school teachers and community leaders. Usually when I finish a seminar, I am plagued by a feeling that I've only scratched the surface of what I really want to teach. The 3 month TTC Worldview & Curriculum course gave me the opportunity to really teach through the "why's and how's" of using the classroom for Christ. Much of the teaching centered on understanding how the Biblical Worldview affects the different subject areas. We also looked at how to integrate the Biblical Worldview into a curriculum that is completely secular. Digging through these issues has enabled me to improve and expand our own materials, including the Teacher Training Manual- something I've wanted to get published for some time. (Maybe 2015 will be the year for that!)



It's absolutely critical, as Zambia's education system develops, for teachers to grasp the significance and relevance of Christ in all areas of life, and then understand how to teach that to their students. The Worldview and Curriculum training course equips the teachers to use any curriculum- even the current deficient and ungodly ones, to clearly demonstrate God's sovereignty and saving grace to their students. They will be prepared to use what often amounts



By training, and equipping teachers to use their classroom as a vehicle for evangelism and discipleship, we can effectively reach a generation for Christ.

to less than nothing to create an atmosphere of discipleship in the classroom. Through the teachers we can impact a generation for Christ and create lasting change in Africa.

As an additional bonus, it's been nice to have a local opportunity for teacher training! Fuel costs in Zambia are rising rapidly. Even with a favorable exchange rate we are paying about \$8/gallon. Having such an incredible opportunity for ministry near Kabwe has been very helpful in that regard.

Strength in Weakness

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

II Corinthians 12:9

Fifteen years of traveling in Africa has taken a toll on my body. And Africa's toll rate is not so much in dollars and cents as it is in sicknesses and parasites. I've had malaria now more times than I can count- we stopped at 16. Food poisoning, parasitic infections, violent stomach bugs, and tropical diseases are "all in a day's work" when you are a missionary in Africa!

While I'm still young and have (I hope!) plenty of "miles" left to go on this body, I'm definitely feeling the effects of the diseases, infections, and lead poisoning (not to mention the many cocktails of pills I've received to treat all of that!) I often feel... tattered. And tired. Some days I struggle to complete even basic tasks. This has been both frustrating and demoralizing. We have tried many, many different doctors, hospitals, and forms of treatment ranging from over-the-counter, to in-patient, to alternative. I'm thankful that so many options are available these days. I'm pretty sure if I was a missionary 100 years ago, I would be dead by now!

In May I decided to go to Nairobi, Kenya to see tropical disease specialists. Their expertise aside, the labs there are *far* more reliable than the ones here in Zambia. I prayed for answers and a cure. After a week of expensive



Some days it's difficult to find the strength that I need., but I know that God provides for each moment. I'm grateful to be serving Him here in Africa.

poking and prodding, I did get results. The doctor discovered that my intestines were a resort-like facility for a large colony of giardia (a parasite). A very heavy dose of medication crashed their party. This was great news and I've definitely felt better as a result. Unfortunately, I was also diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. The cause is unknown and there is no definitive treatment. Happily, the doctor was able to "clear" me for pushing through the pain. This is worth noting and praising God for- 2 1/2 years ago I was nearing kidney failure and had reduced liver function (both probably caused by lead poisoning and tropical diseases). At that point in time I was told strictly to rest when I didn't feel well. When I didn't follow that instruction I experienced serious effects. I guess you can say the diagnoses were not terrible and

came with a lot of good news. The CFS should go away at some point in the future. Until then I make the most of every ounce of strength that I have.

The fatigue has been spiritually challenging for me. I thrive on working hard and getting things done. I know that God has a purpose in everything. The seasons of life, whether summers of happiness or winters of sorrow, are meaningful and important. My present health is no exception. It can be easy to find ourselves immersed in the daily grind, chasing the next project, without actually *pursuing the Lord* in it. I can shamefully say there are times when I get so busy "serving the Lord" that I am no longer seeking Him. Dealing with chronic fatigue has forced me to pursue Him and His plans more carefully. I need to lean on Him for daily strength and direction to use my time and energy effectively. He does this in so many ways; I'm thankful for His grace. I'm working on keeping the Lord as my focus and goal, and leaving the glory and the working particulars to Him. His strength must be made perfect in my weakness.

2014----->

We have a very busy season ahead of us. I have a feeling it's going to fly by. We're hosting several outreach groups in the coming months (I better prioritize that second bathroom...). We love bringing people into our home to share our life with them as they "wet their feet" in Africa's dubious waters. This is probably Ashley's favorite time of year. She loves nothing more than a house full of short-termers to train, feed, and guide through missions and culture.

I'm planning several major field trips around Zambia for teacher training, evangelism training workshops, etc. This is my

favorite part of our work here. I love to see God's people in Africa study His Word and grow in their understanding of how Scripture impacts every part of life. I am awed by the difference that Christ can make in a community that learns to seek Him first. I feel incredibly privileged to be able to share that journey with God's people in Africa and watch as they use what they learn to transform their communities for Christ.



Above: Monica really has a heart for "the least of these". She loved being the one to help teach about hygiene and distribute these precious bars of soap from SoapBox! www.SoapBoxSoaps.com

Left: Freddy loves to play. Any time, any place. He had a great time meeting new friends and helping Dad in Chongwe.

Later this year we plan to go on an extended field trip together. All of us. In the car. Three small children. On a field trip in the bush. This is a good thing. It is. I'll keep telling myself that!

It would be the first time for Olivia to go to "the bush". Monica and Frederick absolutely thrive in the African villages, and I think Olivia will love it too. It will be a great opportunity for them to share their own talents with

others and make new friends around Zambia. We can all use a little practice with Bemba too. We continue to pick up more and more, but as they say here it's "panono panono" or slowly by slowly! That being said, we can now say "ndemu Zambian" (I am Zambian) comfortably as we grow more and more to love this country.

Friends

We've been blessed with many visitors already this year. Ashley's dad was our first guest in the Mission House, arriving from Arizona the day after we moved in. While this was his first trip to Africa, you wouldn't know it. He fit in so well that he earned the nickname "Mbuya" from our village friends and tried every dish the Zambian women could come up with. Go dad!

Ashley's friend Sarah came for 2 weeks and joined us on a quick holiday in Livingstone- home of Victoria Falls. It was perfect timing. After the rush to finish the house and move in we were very ready for a break. I enjoyed several days by the pool with the kids, eating pizza and drinking Coke. Ashley and Sarah traveled all over Livingstone and even into Chobe park in Botswana to see all they could. I've been to the park quite a few times, but because of a season of life filled with little ones, Ashley hasn't gotten to go in several years. Suffice it to be said, she thoroughly enjoyed herself.

Our friends Teddy, Andee, and their one year old son Caleb stayed with us for several months. They spent many, many hours helping us with our Mission House. We are incredibly grateful for both their friendship and the many hours of labor Teddy put into our house. Olivia is really going to miss Caleb!



We need your help

I'm planning a trip to the States in November. I'll be coming on my own (or possibly with Monica if we can get her a ticket too.) I make these trips home for several reasons. ~~The first is probably steak.~~ (just kidding; sort of) I return to the States every couple of years because it's an opportunity for me to reconnect with family and friends, spend time growing spiritually with our church Body and brothers & sisters in Christ, and raise awareness and support for our family and projects here in Zambia. To accomplish this I need appointments with pastors and church leaders, meetings with small groups, Bible studies, congregations, etc. If you haven't hosted anything like this before it's very simple. Gather a group of people and have a source of electricity for my laptop plus a screen & projector if that's available so I can show pictures. If you are connected to any groups that would be interested in meeting me and seeing pictures of the amazing work God is doing in Africa, please get in touch with us *as soon as possible*. We are building an itinerary that will start on the East Coast and end on the West Coast. There's a good chance we can come to you! I would be truly grateful for the opportunity to share a piece of our life with you and your church or small group.

Thank you sincerely for your prayers, support, and encouragement. We have had a few rough times recently, but through it all we have felt the supreme presence of our almighty God guiding, protecting, and loving our family. Your prayers are a big part of our work.

Pro Rege,

Timothy, Ashley, Monica,
Frederick, & Olivia Keller

Please pray for...

- God's grace in giving His teachers in Africa the wisdom and courage they need to impact a generation for Christ.
- Health and strength to meet the many challenges of each day
- Safety in our travels ahead
- The Lord's grace in using us to make a difference for Him in Zambia

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