

# DECEMBER 2020



## Muluutas first Christmas

*"I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:5-6*

### Give thanks

Despite the challenging year we have all faced, we find that – when we stop to think – there is much to give thanks for.

We enjoyed a fabulous honeymoon in Fort Portal (see pic above). Rachael was so relaxed she thought something was wrong! Nestled deep in God's creation was a truly refreshing and revitalising place to be. Marriage continues to be a joy. We've attached an article Rachael wrote recently on getting married in lockdown.

We have also delighted in taking opportunities to serve together. Below is a picture of Bernie preaching at a church led by our marriage counsellors. He particularly enjoyed the chance to reach out to people in their local language (Luganda). We loved leading a training session together (on the gospel) for the mission's team of another church in Kampala.



Whilst we were encouraged, we were also reminded of what great work there is to do in simply making plain the truths from the Bible: how we can be reconciled to God through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Statistical Update

- Deaths: 224. Confirmed cases: 27,766. Recoveries: 9,921. Samples tested: 683,236. Population: 46,383,419. In 10 weeks, deaths and confirmed cases have tripled. Recoveries have almost doubled. Tests conducted have risen by around 50%.
- Social distancing and mask-wearing is compulsory but less than 5% of people wear masks in Kampala, including police. This figure reduces the further out of Kampala you travel. Recently, 100 'random' people were arrested for not wearing masks.
- Curfew is still in place from 9pm until 6am. Churches can meet with up to 70 people. Schools remain closed except for candidate classes and independent schools that can meet the government standards.
- Some residential candidates have started campaigning in bullet-proof vests and helmets. Tear gas and live ammunition seem to accompany candidates as they campaign.
- Elections are on the horizon: 14 Jan 2021.
- Some people think the chances of another severe lockdown after the election are high.

We were delighted to be involved in the wedding of our dear guard, Kato and his wife (see us with all four of their children in the pic overleaf). We had the two younger boys for a sleepover and then the great responsibility of getting everyone to church on time – including the groom and groomsman.

Bernie continues to enjoy his work and is grateful to be joined by a new, local team member as they work towards taking their product for farmers 'live' early next year, after two years of pre-live work. Rachael continues to thrive with various trainings, ladies' ministry and biblical counselling and is grateful for answered prayer that the continued subsidised rates of the counselling modules will in fact continue. We are still looking into the possibility of getting funding for the masters.

## Keep praying

There is much to give thanks for but much still to pray for. We are physically tired and emotionally weary. Coronavirus and the looming elections have left us living 'on edge', so to speak. Constantly weighing up risks is mentally draining and we feel socially isolated from friends and family which, as so many of you know, is no small thing. It looks like we'll be celebrating Christmas in a quiet, small way but it's a great opportunity to focus on the reason for the celebrations. We are particularly grateful for all the parcels, cards and messages we have received which encourage us no end at this time of year. We consistently and persistently remember that Jesus really is all we need, that he cares for us and that he is in full control of the world and of our lives. He is where we can find security in an uncertain world and where we find comfort when our hearts are saddened.



The elections have been moved forward since we last wrote and will now take place on Thursday 14 January. Last month we had a couple of tragic days as a result of protests concerning the election. 60 civilians, including children, lost their lives. We are expecting more unrest in the coming weeks.

Coronavirus has also taken a turn for the worse. Very little testing is being done but 10-15% of all tests turn out to be positive. There are reports that hospitals are turning patients away and that there is a waiting list for ICUs. Cost for treatment in a hospital for one day is around £1,000. And whilst these facts are clearly stated, still very few people follow the 'standard procedures' of wearing masks and washing hands etc. Over Christmas, it is usual for 70% of Kampala to travel back to the villages to be with family over the extended Christmas break. The combination of this mass travelling alongside mass campaign rallies does not bode well for the spread of the disease.

It's not an easy environment to live in and we sometimes feel that the country is sizzling away in a pressure cooker. But, despite this, or even because of this, we keep on talking and speaking of Jesus. We keep on looking to him and to that time when we will enjoy New Creation: the world and our bodies will be made new and sin will be swept away. And then we look at our lives now and ask the Spirit to help us to serve Jesus, the people around us and one another in whatever small ways we can.

We'd like to wish you all a very joyful Christmas – whatever it may look like – as we remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and what was written of him in Matthew 2:6 *'Bethlehem ... out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people.'* With Love, RnB! Xxx



## Prayer requests

- Pray for rest and refreshment over the Christmas break (18 Dec – 3 Jan).
- Pray for quality time with one another and with the Lord and for increasing opportunities to serve together next year.
- Pray that people would be wise over the Christmas break and that a greater number of people would model wise living during these times of corona. Continue to pray for health workers in overrun hospitals.
- Pray that there might be a fair and just election and that no more people would lose their lives.
- Pray for the outcome of the election to result in (amongst other things) Christians being able to get on quietly with their lives and work of making Jesus known and helping people grow as disciples of Christ.
- Pray that we would learn to be content with whatever Christmas looks like this year for us and with the strong possibility of another lockdown after the elections.
- Pray that we would keep on pointing as many as possible to the 'life to the full' that is on offer though the Lord Jesus Christ.