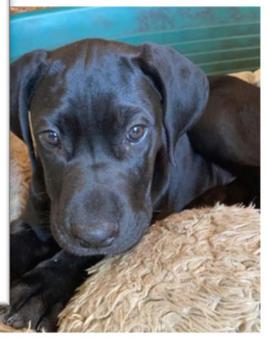


JULY 2020



Dear Friends,

First, a massive thank you for your ongoing prayer and support for us as a family. We are very grateful for the way you have enabled, encouraged and persevered with us over 15 years!

This year, as for everyone, has been unusual with unique challenges thanks to the coronavirus pandemic. We are very grateful to the Lord for sustaining us through tough times and for the incredibly blessed situation we are in with a healthy family, food, shelter and community.

The year started well. In January, Azola moved into Bethany's room, Bethany to Miriam's room, and the study/guest room fitted out for Miriam (we weren't quite ready for her to leave home – which was a good thing as she came back for four months!).

It was a great blessing to have the whole family together for lockdown as Miriam returned (just in time) to South Africa. She has thrived in her first year at Durham, has found a great church and been asked to be CU rep for her college. Nat enjoyed chatting with her through her anthropology and sociology essays and learning more about the #feesmustfall and decolonisation movement in South Africa.

The unpredictability of the new 'life normal' has been a challenge with online/virtual/home schooling for four children. Bethany, who is 'self-schooled' anyway, has continued much as normal. The three boys, and three schools, have navigated various online, face-to-face, back online, break, back to school periods, depending on government directives and individual school decisions. Azola remains at De La Salle which has different term dates to Isaac and Chris' schools but has remained online for most of the time.

We realise that Azola has struggled academically for several years along with family tragedy. He has been promoted through two grades without 'passing' them and is now finding the work beyond him. Helen has spent many hours helping him. We are looking at Isaac's school as a possibility for him next year. Please pray as this would be another upheaval for him, having lost his parents and grandmother in the last four years.

There have been a few silver linings to lockdown: having Miriam home for four months, repurposing various communal rooms in the house, moving furniture and clearing 16 years of 'junk' and repurposing the garage to a

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room has been a great gain. We have also eaten a host of new dishes, including starting a 'sour-dough' journey, curries from scratch and many sweet treats.

We have enjoyed services and prayer meetings at several of our supporting churches in the UK. The family have also enjoyed watching the Bible Project after supper each evening. We have been working through the OT books and as we write have just watched the book of Hosea. We can thoroughly recommend it for family watching. Everyone, including mum and dad, is learning something (bibleproject.com)!

Chris is in his last year of schooling with final exams due in a few months. He has missed various 'rites of passage'. He fortunately made the last first-team cricket match but there has been no hockey and no matric ball. Like all of his year group, he is struggling with the uncertainty of how this year will end. There have already been rumours that this academic year will only finish part way into 2021. He has applied to South African universities to do a general BA with law but all depends on his results.

Beth has a growing following on YouTube and is forever looking for opportunities to increase her subscribers – shout out link: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqDEwnaGMme_46St-ZrDt2Q (please subscribe)! Beth had her first live session a couple of weeks ago and although she would say she suffers from social anxiety, thrived on the experience. She is also enjoying dancing and working with Isaac and Azola on short clips.

Isaac is enjoying school and loves having a 'twin' around in Azola. They can be heard playing for hours in the garden on the trampoline, tormenting the dogs and building a fort. Isaac has a growing rock collection which occasionally has to be rescued from the puppy. Sadly, our dog, Zumba, had to be put down in April. We now have a Great Dane puppy (are you mad?), called Marmite. He is part of our ongoing security plan.

Helen is taking each day as it comes and is generally happy. However, when she stops to think about it, she is finding lockdown very long and she is discovering how painful lockdown is for extroverts. She continues assisting with online schooling for the younger boys, her weekly women's bible study and meeting up to pray with ladies (all online now). Particular highlights during lockdown are the St. Ebbes daily services, Hope Church prayer meetings and keeping up with international friends more regularly.

Nat is enjoying having more time at home with the family but is working very hard to lead the JBC staff team as they re-tool JBC to reach our students online. He has kept up his running, typically running 10-21km with friends, followed by breakfast since the restaurants have reopened.

It has been an incredible time for JBC. In the space of three weeks in April we morphed from a college that thrived on high-level face to face contact for hands-on practical training to a college training online. The staff team worked incredibly hard, not only to establish a platform for disseminating classes, but also in recording classes, editing and preparing the finished product, contacting students and establishing ways for them to access the classes. And all of this while coping with our own new realities. It has been a huge challenge to get our training to the students in a way that they can access it and we are grateful to the Lord for the progress made. We still have significant challenges ahead, although there is also the silver lining of our material being readily available to our partner colleges throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

We are surrounded by huge needs, even more than normal. Although our COVID mortality rates are lower than many countries there are huge economic and social consequences. The pandemic has exacerbated the disparities and lack of access for so many to so much of what we take for granted - like healthcare, education, food and employment. Many people queue for hours for food parcels in order to be able to eat. Please pray that the Lord gives us wisdom and generosity as we seek to help the needs that come our way as a family and as a college.

Thank you again for your support and prayers.

With much love from us all,
Nat, Helen, Miriam, Chris, Beth, Isaac and Azola