

Dear all,

15th August 2020

Greetings from Lusaka,

It is a beautiful Saturday afternoon. The birds are chirping outside and there is a quiet stillness. Lusaka gets noisy at night with a chorus of barking dogs and the thud of distant music. Generally in the day time, the mission guest house where I am staying, is a peaceful haven – broken only by the odd honking car horn at one of the gates or the ‘call for prayer’ that can be heard in the background. The guest house sits on the edge of Zambia’s capital, close to the airport. It is the perfect location to stay to break up journeys or as a base for getting things done in Lusaka. We are very grateful for a safe homely place to stay.

I was on my way to Greece for a medical conference, but God had other plans and I ended up ‘stuck’ in the UK for several months while covid lockdown happened. Eleven cancelled and rebooked flights later, I have returned on my 12th attempt. It is wonderful to be back in Zambia and I appreciate it all the more having been away for so long. Lockdown was a great opportunity for a time of reflection and refocus. July was so great getting to see family and friends – lots of good memories and special times. I was able to do a lot of hospital work from abroad and keep up to date with my patients but am so excited to get back again.

I’m extremely grateful to Rebekah Heelham who covered for me in my absence at Chitokoloki, kept in communication and extended her stay when I couldn’t get back. She has been really a blessing to the work. Of the 23 of us, only the Hannas and Dorothy are currently at Chitokoloki at present. The rest of our team are currently scattered abroad – each with their own challenges at this time. Congratulations to Chris and Alison Brundage on the birth of their second son Calvin – pray for them as they try and get all the necessary paperwork (birth certificate, passport, entry permits) in order for them to return. David and Lorraine’s son Philip is planning Godwilling to get married this month (postponed from June) and we hope all will go well despite the various covid restrictions and regulations required.

Over the last few weeks, one by one, various missionaries from across Zambia have been able to return as flights are being recommenced. A covid negative certificate is required for travel and entry; and 14 days quarantine to be observed on arrival. I’m glad to be able to do mine at the self-catering unit of the guest house and am almost complete. Next week, I have to pick up my work permit from immigration and do a long list of jobs in town. The Lord gave help continuously over the last few months. I received my new passport in the post just before lockdown and the Passport Office closed for several months. My work permit application was able to be done from overseas thanks to Phil Cole and the renewal approved. Lots of answers to prayer! It is a long and very strict process to pick up ones permit at immigration. The offices open at 8am but I’m advised that to be seen 10am, you have to be there in the line by 6am at the latest. No bags or phones are allowed in

the building so that makes things tricky for solo travellers like myself who have to get a taxi there. Thankfully, I have a lovely regular taxi driver who has promised to help and wait until I'm done. It is good to have the Lord with me as I go about such daily tasks. He is always one step ahead and it is wonderful to know He watches over us 24-7.

Matthew 24:6-8 *And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

It might seem like a really strange and crazy year but it is such a comfort to know that God is on the throne and in complete control. We should not be surprised when we read the news - all these things were prophesized – and it should spur us on to realise that the Lord will soon return. The need for the gospel is greater than ever.

John 14:1-6 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Rebekah and Kennedy (right) in theatre.

We have a superb team looking after the hospital at present – Dr Felix Chibwe, a Christian surgeon who is with us doing his research project, Mr Maambo, our medical licensuate and Mr Kennedy, our senior clinical officer. With the varying covid restrictions and reduced movement of people, we are thankful that hospital has been a bit quieter and a lot of surgery on hold. There are currently 9186 recorded cases of covid in Zambia (76 deaths). The numbers have really been increasing over the last couple of weeks and there are now starting to be cases reported in our local areas. It is likely that Chitokoloki will start to see some cases soon. We pray that the Lord will provide help and that we won't have any critical cases as we don't have the resources or



manpower to cope with multiple patients needing intensive care. Our Zambian nurses are extremely scared – particularly when seeing the continuous news reports of how the western world is struggling. Regularly, we deal with diseases that have a much greater mortality rate. Rabies for example has a 100% mortality. TB, pneumonia, malaria, measles, malnutrition and HIV are all our

normal workload; and we sadly lose patients. With God's help, we will just take one day at a time and deal with the cases as they come. We are grateful for the opportunities we have to share the gospel with patients and staff. It is wonderful to be able to share God's love as we care for each one.

Resources are always a challenge. My quarantine has actually been extremely busy – organising supplies, procuring items, making phone calls and doing bank transfers. Hopefully this will save time over the next few days as I just have to travel round the different places and pick up the items that are ready and paid for. We are on our last few bags of IV fluids and blood bags are out of stock – both absolute essentials. Insulin is not available in the entire country and not likely to be so for a while. This is extremely worrying, as insulin is a key medication for many diabetics. So whilst covid is a new challenge, it is just one of many of the daily challenges we face. Each week in Zambia there are about 20 maternal deaths and 100 newborn babies die. Blood continues to be our biggest stress although our lab has started to be allowed to do their own blood drives, with testing still done in the province blood bank. We hope this will help resolve the continuous shortages.

Zambia, like the rest of the world, has had significant hits to its economy. Tourism has particularly been hit as no visitors have been allowed to enter the country for a number of months. Many depend on tourists for their livelihood. Taxi drivers have been struggling to find business – the reduction in people arriving at the airport has particularly impacted those I know. Regulations like in most places with social distancing, handwashing and face masks are in place. These are strictly enforced with £35 fine or 6 months in prison for failing to obey. Breaking quarantine comes with a much heavier fine or 2 years imprisonment. It is nice to see the country taking the situation seriously despite the struggles of obtaining tests, PPE and how/where to care for critically ill patients. It is also encouraging to see Zambia giving honour to God and encouraging prayer at these difficult times.

Presidential speech https://www.sh.gov.zm/?wpfb_dl=254

We trust that you will continue to remember us in prayer – Zambia as a nation, Chitokoloki - our little corner of the world and all of our team wherever they may be in the world at this time.

With grateful thanks and love in the Lord,

Julie-Rachel

Esther 4:14

“for such a time as this”