

The Kellers' Prayer Letter

May 2012

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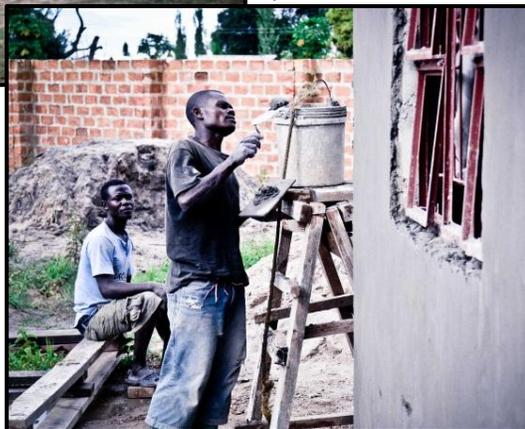
To Everything a Season

"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born... a time to heal... a time to build up... a time to laugh... a time to love... a time of war and a time of peace." Ecclesiastes 3:1-8



This whole project, from the property's availability to the funding and even the timing, has been such an incredible testimony to us of God's grace and provision.

Right: Patrick has been helpful in keeping the construction process going when I'm away.



Dear Friends & Family,

The Lord's blessings this year have been abundant both in our family and ministry. We thank you for your prayers, as they have held us up and encouraged us as we carry out our work in Africa.

So far 2012 has been a busy year. Early January saw me off to South Africa to source materials for our **Mission House**. Incredibly, it's more economical to travel 1,000 miles for many of the finishing materials such as plumbing, fixtures, etc. than it is to purchase them locally in Zambia (there is also a substantial difference in quality). While in South Africa I was able to reconnect with many of our friends. Someone even loaned me their classic Peugeot for all my errands! It was built for a driver half my size and topped out at a ripping 50mph. Surprisingly this turned out to be a safer mode of travel as all the over-ambitious truck drivers changed their course as soon as they spotted me flooring it in the slow lane.

To move the building materials back to Zambia we sub-leased cargo space from a fellow mission group working here in Kabwe. This was one more demonstration of God's provision for us as we build this house. We're thankful for the support that has come in and continue to pray for funds to pay for the finishing materials. Please keep our Mission House in your prayers. We are looking forward to the increased capacity to serve the Lord in Kabwe (not to mention space for our family!)

My trip to South Africa was jam-packed with errands and my schedule was tight. Originally I was going to leave straight after Christmas and be home by mid-January, leaving plenty of time before Baby's due date (February 5th). Unfortunately we weren't able to pull that together and I couldn't leave until early January. Because Frederick was born 10 days early I wanted to make sure I didn't cut it too close. Well, we have now redefined that term! The new definition in our household goes something like this: "cutting it close: arriving home from a foreign country after twelve hours of traveling to find your wife in labor with delivery not in the too distant future". Yes, it's true. After a long day's travel, I arrived home to hear a perky, "It isn't false labor!" (I didn't know you were *in labor*, Dear!) Fortunately, God's grace is always sufficient! Ashley had a big meal ready for us, we called some missionary friends who had volunteered to help out with the birth, took the kids over to our neighbors, and I turned the vehicle back toward Lusaka.



Monica loves her new sister a LOT. Perhaps even a lot more than Olivia would like!

By this time it was nearly 8pm. Driving any African road at night is dangerous, but I've always considered the 2 hour stretch between Kabwe and Lusaka to be particularly treacherous, even during the day. Aside from the potholes and blind corners, there are many drunk truck drivers, people walking in the road (many of them also drunk), unlit cyclists, and broken down vehicles (in the middle of the road). As I carefully navigated around the many road hazards, I had visions of delivering our baby in the dark, on the side of the road, in the middle of nowhere, outside a rowdy African "bar" (lots of those along this road as it is a truck route).

The Lord brought us safely through the outskirts of Lusaka and we arrived at Fairview Hospital in plenty of time. We chose this hospital because of its growing reputation for cleanliness- not a common recommendation amongst African hospitals! They were also rumored to have a trained neonatal pediatrician. While we were pleased with this aspect of the facility, we were sorely disappointed in the midwife and doctor! They seemed determined to make the delivery more complicated than it was. I was glad to have our friends Ann Rachel and Page along for back-up as we had to watch over Ashley and later Olivia quite diligently. Because of their help, I was even able to sneak away for a much-needed power nap in the car after we got to the hospital!

In spite of the stressful journey, long day, and exasperating medical staff, the birth went exceptionally well. I think Olivia's delivery may have been the first truly un-medicated, all-natural birth the doctor (from Uzbekistan) ever witnessed. She seemed unsure of the situation right up to our release from the hospital- which to our surprise came only 3 hours after Olivia was born!!

Because of the long drive home and lack of good medical facilities in Kabwe, we decided to stay one night in Lusaka with Olivia. God had again prepared the way for us and our favorite missionary guest house was vacant. They



Prepared to argue her way out of a mandatory 2 day hospital stay, Ashley was shocked to be released mere hours after delivery.

Olivia Alice Keller
06:15, Saturday, January 21st, 2012
7lbs, 20 ½ "

have a coffee machine, which by this point was a necessary amenity for me! We had the whole place to ourselves- they even gave me my own room so that I could get a good night's sleep! Olivia now holds the record for their "youngest guest" at 6 hours of age.

We're grateful for the Lord's grace in bringing Olivia into the world without any complications. Her early arrival actually made our lives a bit easier, as we had originally planned to "move" to Lusaka for several weeks. Thank you for your continued prayers. It's nearing "winter" in Zambia and Kabwe tends to have epidemics of measles, whooping cough, TB, etc. Please pray for the Lord's hand over the children's health and safety during this time.

You can start collecting books!

We are planning another **Container Project**!!! Our first Container Project was incredibly successful in its goals of saving on the financial burden of bringing materials from South Africa and providing African teachers and pastors with desperately needed discipleship materials, classroom supplies, and Bibles. Watch our website for more details and keep your eyes and ears open for Christian school curriculums, school supplies, Bibles, Christian discipleship materials, etc. If you hear of churches or schools looking to replace old materials, please snatch them up (or put us in contact with the people who have them). We need YOU to help us collect a container full again! We have several drop-off locations in Phoenix and Tucson, as well as a shipping address if you live outside of Arizona. Additionally,



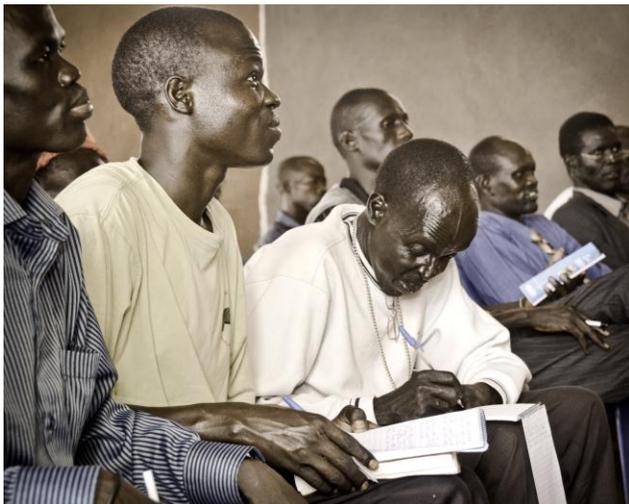
we are looking for opportunities to speak to churches and small groups about our projects and can pick up materials then. Please get in touch with us or the ITMI office if you have questions or would like a flyer to pass out to your friends about our Container Project.

Return to South Sudan

After the Sudanese ceasefire was signed in 2005, I found myself working more frequently in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and South Africa. This was largely due to the fact that I could reach them with supplies and Bibles at a significantly lower cost than driving all the way across Africa to reach Sudan. With the birth of South Sudan and liberation from the Islamic North in 2011, the largely Christian population in the South began to rebuild their lives. While there are still conflicts in the heavily contested oil fields along the border, for the most part peace has finally come- the first peace in many generations.

From 1998 – 2005, I spent a great deal of time in Sudan. Much has happened politically since then. As I embarked on this trip (my first time into the newly born South Sudan) the real questions in my mind were: “What foundation is this new nation building on? Are they building on Christ as they intended, or something else?” My goal was to determine how we could best help them build their country on the Chief Cornerstone, that is Christ (Ephesians 2:20).

The beginning of this trip to South Sudan wasn't quite what I expected, but then again, what *isn't* expected should be *the* expected here in Africa! It actually took three trips to Lusaka (a two hour drive each way) before the airline was able to get my ticket sorted out. (For more about this part of my adventure visit our blog)



Their eagerness for the Gospel is humbling.

clearly taken its toll on him and heatstroke was likely if he didn't get some rest. He needed to get out of the heat and fast. Memories of my own Sudanese sun stroke, near-death experience came to mind as I watched him struggle to keep moving. After a short time, we were able to find a place to stay that had an air conditioner. The cost of staying there was ridiculous- and it appeared that toilet seats were not included. However we decided that a pricey night with air-conditioning was better than a night spent with heat stroke in a local hospital. We later found out that Juba is currently the second most expensive city in the world to visit. After seeing how much things cost, I believe it. If the grungy guesthouse we stayed in cost so much I can only imagine what the hotels catering to the UN and various other big-budget groups are charging! I guess this is what happens when you have an economy built completely on foreign aid and lucrative non-government organizations.

The next day it was my turn to teach in the melting pot. I was privileged to work with a group of chaplains and military officers who had little understanding of the Gospel. Although the conflict in South



Vicky often helps me during discipleship workshops by translating the lesson into Moru or Arabic.

When I arrived in Sudan I was warmly greeted by a heat that flirted with 110°F... in the shade! Fortunately, I didn't have to wait around very long before meeting up with ITMI Director Steve Evers and Sudanese missionary Vicky Waraka. I've always considered Vicky to be my Sudanese mother. For years she took care of me when I got malaria and made sure I ate my vegetables. This trip she even remembered my passion for Sudanese mangoes and made sure I had many opportunities to enjoy them. It was a poignant reminder of the Saints in Sudan and their love for the Lord and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Because of my flight delays, I missed some of the meetings we had planned. By the time I arrived, Steve had already been teaching most of the day in a small church with a tin roof- a tin roof that converted the place into a melting pot. The heat had



Commander Gidalla has opened many opportunities for us to continue discipling the soldiers of South Sudan.

Sudan has largely settled down, there still remains a lot of deeply rooted anger and bitterness, particularly amongst the soldiers. In this time of quasi-peace many of the Sudanese men find themselves with a loss of purpose and direction. As a result, suicide is growing as one of the major killers in their military. Thousands of men have given themselves over to substance abuse. Commander Gidalla, one of the key leaders of South Sudan's military, was grateful that we were able to bring the Word of God to his troops. A Christian himself, he understands that without the Prince of Peace there is no real peace.

Even with the end of the war we found that funerals still happen frequently. This is a challenge when planning ministry activities in Africa. Even though funerals are very commonplace (often a daily occurrence), each one brings a screeching halt to everything else. This trip was no exception. One of our discipleship training workshops was a nearly a no-show on the first day, as the pastor who was in charge of spreading the word forgot- he was busy with funerals. It was frustrating in many ways. Aside from a missed opportunity to teach, we were saddened that death is still such a common way of life. On that particular day we faced a decision: do we cancel? Or is it worth teaching the few who came? We decided it was better to carry on with teaching the few. This seemed to be the right choice, as word spread fast, and before long we had a full house. It never ceases to amaze me just how eager people in South Sudan are to learn of God's word.

Besides having a full program of teaching and preaching, I was able to see many of my Sudanese friends- some of whom are family to me. This was my greatest joy in returning. Friendship matured during years of conflict and sorrow creates a bond that cannot be easily explained. As such, my returning to them was literally a dream come true. I thank God for allowing me to be a part of their lives. I thank each of you for faithfully praying and supporting us because that has enabled this ministry to take place. Clearly the needs and opportunities to minister in South Sudan are great, and I look forward to continuing my part in building Christ's Kingdom there. I have posted several more stories about my trip through South Sudan and Uganda on our blog (find out what a Boda-boda is and how to survive it).



Pray that South Sudan continues to carry its witness into the 10-40 window



Would you like an opportunity to **expose your church**, small group, or youth group to missions? We will be **returning to the US** in the fall. We would love to share photos and stories about our work here in Africa and how the Lord is using us to further His kingdom "in the bush". We have incredible testimonies from our work in the field as well as God's provision for our family. All five of us will be traveling together to several different States and later I'll be going to a few more on my own. This is a great way to **get others involved in missions** through prayer, support, and involvement! If you would like to get your church or group on our itinerary, please get in touch with us as soon as possible. You can reach us at Ashley@KellersC23.com or call the ITMI office at (888)918-4100. We've been blessed by your prayers, encouragement, and support. Give us the opportunity to show you how God is using our family in Africa!

Don't forget to follow us on our website and blog:
www.KellersC23.com and
www.KellersC23.com/blog.

Pro Rege,

Timothy, Ashley, Monica, Frederick,
& Olivia Keller

Please pray...

- For the funds to pay for the finishing materials for our Missions House
- For our health and safety in epidemic season
- For the people of South Sudan and their newfound peace.

Gifts may be sent to: The Keller Household, c/o ITMI, PO Box 7575, Tempe, AZ 85281
To receive a tax receipt, cheques should be made out to "ITMI" and designated to "The Kellers"