

FROM NEIL & SARA KENNEDY

Dear everyone,

Oh dear. We're only into the second month, and we're already a few days late for October's update!

This could be interpreted as either (a) how busy our lives have become or (b) that we're disorganised....
Probably a combination of both!

Over October it got hotter and hotter - up to 38 or 39 some days. The rains have begun, and the first few heavy showers have resulted in a big rise in the ant population. We had a horror movie style infestation of the kettle one morning, with a whole colony taking up residence in the partially filled jug overnight, only to be rudely awoken next morning when Sara turned on the switch. It took her a few moments to understand why the kettle was moving by itself!

Looking back it has been a busy month. Sara has started teaching 4 days a week in the school Grace attends. This is a real blessing – it's exactly the sort of work she was hoping for. Initially she had thought that she would wait until after Christmas, but it was too good an opportunity to miss. The kids are happy at school, and have a full program of after-school activities. Both are on the swimming squads, Ben is playing cricket and we've found a piano teacher (and a piano!) for Grace. Piano teachers are scarce, so again we were very thankful for God's provision.

The rains also herald the beginning of the really hectic clinical period at Queens. Gastroenteritis and malaria admissions are up. One of the most important tasks for a consultant here is to go round frequently and make sure that anyone who is ready for home is discharged promptly. The beds fill again within minutes! For the medics who read this, the clinical load is fantastically varied. Every complication of TB or HIV you can imagine, Burkitt's lymphoma, haemolytic anaemia, cyanotic congenital heart disease etc etc. There's plenty to see and teach on! Neil has taken over the organisation of the postgraduate teaching program. We have 6 Malawian registrars all training to become consultants, and he's enjoyed working with them. After 3-4 postgrad years in Malawi, they go to South Africa to complete their training. Predictably, the main problem is ensuring there is an adequately funded post for them to return to. However, as they say here – "pan'gono pan'gono" – 'bit-by-bit' or 'one step at a time'.

We were delighted when last Saturday night, the Christian Medical Fellowship used our house as a venue for the final years' leaving party. Over 50 attended. They put up a spotlight in the garden, set out plastic chairs, some girls took over the kitchen and the boys did the BBQ (same male/female split here as at home!). After some singing, and a talk from a local pastor encouraging them to be true to their calling to care for the sick, they all crammed onto the khonde for the food. The CMF have also decided to use our house as a venue for regular prayer breakfasts – once a month on a Saturday morning. It will be a good opportunity for Christian students and doctors to meet and fellowship.

We have been attending a Presbyterian church about 15 minutes drive from our house. It's a big congregation – over 1000 most Sundays. It was great to meet B'ayana Chunga there. B'ayana is the son of our first 'head of station' (minister in charge) at Embangweni, and was just 17 when we first met him. We have an abiding memory of him enthusiastically playing the 'air-guitar' to accompany a solo in the hospital chapel! He's since been to Bible college, completed a degree and has set up a thriving ministry to teenagers and young adults here in Blantyre called 'Wings of Hope'. He has a regular column in one of the biggest Sunday newspapers where he is given free rein to discuss the issues of the day from a Christian perspective, and broadcasts on MBC Radio 2. It is encouraging to see how the Lord has used him. Now 28, he's given up his air-guitar performances....!

Some prayer points:

- From the 9th to the 14th November, Neil is in Uganda for an Irish Aid sponsored project seeking to partner 9 Irish and 4 African Universities. Please pray that this will be a useful time, and for Sara and the kids at home in Blantyre when he's away.
- Sara's mum goes into hospital in November for a shoulder replacement. Pray it will go well.
- Continue praying for a good 4WD to get Neil around. He's using a hospital vehicle to get to and from Mulanje mission, but this won't be sustainable in the longer term. Pray for Eugene who is sourcing one for us!
- For the work of CMF – that the meetings will bear fruit in genuine Christian discipleship.

Thanks to all of you who write or email, and particularly to those who pray. Tathokoza (we thank you).

Neil and Sara

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