

Dear Friends,

September 2010

We have some new registrars on the wards – trainees from the UK who have volunteered to work with us for 6-12 months. For a few days, they give you a glimpse again into the differences between life here and in the UK. They see everything with fresh eyes – watching your consultant chase and kill a mouse before he starts the ward round; realising that most of the infants admitted needing oxygen are infected with HIV; speaking to a mum who has travelled for 3 days by foot, steamer and bus from rural Mozambique to get to Queens for an opinion about her child's congenital heart disease. Things that for me are familiar or routine are for them strange and exotic.

We got our own mini-dose of reverse culture shock this summer as we went back to the UK for a break - confusion over the range of stuff in the supermarkets; enjoying the freedom of walking around without thinking much about security; being shocked at how few young people there were in church. We had a super break – catching up with family and friends. The photo is from a family day-trip to Buckingham Palace. PCI were very good to us and let us have a real rest. We loved our week at the Keswick Convention – great teaching, lovely walks, time with friends from Manchester and Ireland. And then back to Malawi! We arrived here safely from Ireland in late August and settled straight back into 'the routine'. We were thankful for just how much it felt like home.



I was (often!) advised over the summer that 'the routine' should become a little less hectic than it was in the first 6 months of the year. So to all my advisors, let me assure you that the arrival of some new staff has allowed me to change clinical areas and hand over some teaching responsibilities. I expected my first week at work to be crazy with postgrad exams, but administrative changes in the college made it all more manageable. Blood pressure sits at about 125/80!

The child protection work is extremely encouraging. The promised social worker, dedicated to coordinating the child protection team, has arrived and uses the office next to mine. The counselling team from City Pentecostal Church are seeing 3-4 children a week – all survivors of sexual abuse. I met today with policemen from all the larger stations in Blantyre and was delighted to hear how their conviction rates have improved in the last 6 months.

Sara has begun her full-time year 6 (P7) teaching job at Phoenix. She is enjoying the new class and is limiting the marking to 1 ½ hours a night! Ben is in 3rd form and started course work for GCSEs causing his parents to feel very old. Grace is in the other year 6 class at Phoenix and coping with her mum teaching her history. Some inter-canine warfare in the last few months led to Snoopy being successfully re-housed with some friends. Ginny is as sloppy as ever.

I will be returning to Ireland for a month of deputation from mid-October, just after finals. I can't believe that another academic year has finished. It was good to see that several of our best-performing students this year were CMF members. In line with the government's plan to move the start of the academic year in 2011 to September, we begin again in December with the 2010/11 intake. At least we get a few weeks break....

When we were back in Ireland, telling stories of our time here so far, it reminded us yet again of the many answers to prayer we've seen – the miracle of the multiplication of the ultrasound machines, steady progress in the child abuse work, the contentment and growth of our children, great teaching opportunities for Sara. Thank you so much for praying for us. Here are a few ideas for the next month or 2:

- Give thanks for a good break over the summer. Pray that the teaching we received will stay with us.
- Pray for Neil's time in deputation. Pray that Sara, Ben and Grace will be kept safe at home when he's away. Pray that he will speak effectively.
- Give thanks for the encouragements in the child protection network. Pray for Mr Salif (our social worker), John Manyumbo (Community child protection worker), Constables Asma, Kalungu, Dziko (all police

victim support officers), Thandu Zimba and her team of counsellors, the doctors in QECH. Pray that the phone calls will be made, the follow-up visits completed to ensure the adequate protection of children

- Pray for 3 kids from my cardiology clinic who are overseas or about to go overseas for corrective open-heart surgery – for Jean, Samita and Glory.

- Pray for Embangweni Mission Hospital. The hospital has had a difficult 18 months resulting in a synod enquiry and a change in leadership. Please pray for Ishmael Nyirenda – the new 'in-charge'.

- Pray for Ben and Grace at school. Pray for their continued spiritual growth.

- Pray for families at home. It was great seeing them all, and though happy to be back here, we miss them!

Best wishes

Neil, Sara, Ben and Grace