

5 December 2010

Dear Friends and Family,

Christmas: "How shall I describe this Holy Night? ... it is the remembrance of the most intimate mystery of life, the birth of God in an agonizing world; it is the planting of the seeds of compassion, freedom and peace in a harsh, un-free, and hateful society; it is hope in a new earth to come..... This day the smallness and vulnerability of the child and the vastness of our earth will both enter my soul. I know that without the child, I have no reason to live but also that without a growing awareness of the suffering of humanity, I will not fulfill the call that the child has given me." Henri Nouwen

Bill and I are going home for Christmas. We are very excited about the opportunity to spend time with my 92 year old mom, sister and brother and their families in New Mexico, Corrie and Brent, Lily and Ethan, our daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren, in McKinney, Texas and Bill's brother and family in Oklahoma City, OK. We will be gone through mid-January and because it is a "holiday" we will not take time to answer emails. Thus we hope any questions can wait until January 2011 when we return.

This morning Bill went with the Hope Companions youth that came from Tharaka on a 10K walk. Rev. Greg Jenks, the founder of ZOE Ministries which Hope Companions is a part of is here for this event with a small team. They are video conferencing with youth in South Carolina that are walking at the same time. The youth have been very excited today and their singing has filled the compound with joy and thanksgiving.

Early this morning I was called and told that my best friend in Kenya, Alice Limberia, died last night. When I received the call I had been doing my devotional reading and had just read the following statement by Henri Nouwen. "Death is not the enemy who puts an end to everything but the friend who takes us by the hand and leads us into the Kingdom of eternal love." I can picture Jesus Christ leading Alice to that Kingdom.

My first five years in Maua I taught at the School of Nursing. I would have never made it through the first year without Alice. She stood beside me, guided me and helped me more than I can ever say. In those 5 years she became my best friend, mentor, spiritual guide and constant support and encourager. She so enlarged by heart, soul and mind by helping me to see a much bigger God. She gave me so many gifts but the most valuable of all was constant glimpses of the Divine. Her faith always stood firm no matter what the circumstances.

The past few years she has had many struggles and much suffering. In these I saw her trust and faith grow stronger as she grew closer and closer to God. Though I have cried many tears today they are not for Alice for I know she is in the Kingdom of eternal love. To honor her I have decided to stop crying and start thanking and praising God for the incredible gift Alice has been and will continue to be in my life. A very bright light has gone out but it is my prayer that all of us that know and love Alicewill glow a little brighter so that together there will be as much light to shine in the darkness. Please join me in praying for her family and friends.



Front row Lt – Rt: Florence Mutiga, Alice Limberia  
Back Row Lt – Rt: Jerri and Salome

Last week we had some of the longest and best rains we have had this season. This week it seems the rainy season has ended. There isn't a cloud in the sky and we haven't had rain for a week. In talking to farmers I have heard that we need more rain and that we have had sufficient. I'm sure that the crops being grown would vary in the amount of rain needed. Please pray that there is a good harvest this year – enough for all to

eat!

While watching a rain storm last week I suddenly had an urge to write a psalm and decided to share it with you.

### A Rainy Season Psalm God's Love and Presence

It has been raining much of the day and as I look out at the dazzling green grass and bushes that have been soaked by the rain, I feel drenched in the love and presence of a merciful and glorious God.

I can smell His presence and love in the perfume scent of our white roses and the fragrance of the rain as it hits the dusty road behind our home.

I can also catch His fragrance, His presence and love in the stinky toilets after continual use with little chance to clean and the infected wound that drains thick, green puss with a putrid odor.

I can see His love and presence in the sparkling green grass with the sun shining on it during a light rain and the rainbow that stretches from one side of the earth to the other.

I can see His presence and love in the dying body of Joseph, who an angry mob burned and cut and the 20 pound nine year old mentally handicapped boy who had been starved all his life for food, love and care.

I can hear God's presence and love in the white browed robin chat with his dawn and dusk flute like song and the rain on our zinc roof at night.

I can hear His presence and love in the long, gut-wrenching cry of the mother in our Pediatric Ward who just lost her baby boy and in the hymn sung around the grave of a mother and baby who died and are being buried together.

God's presence and love are as near as the tiny hand of a 3 year old patient who grasps my hand and we walk together around the hospital compound and the quilt made by Prosper Circle which wraps me tightly each night.

His presence and love are as near as the mosquito that buzzes in my ear while I'm reading outside in the early evening and the miraa chewing young man who brushes my shoulder as he passes me on the sidewalk.

God's love and presence light my way like the sun breaking through the dark clouds creating beauty and warmth and my flashlight on moonless nights walking over the rocky, muddy path to the hospital from home.

His love and presence light my way like the face of the mother who thanks us profusely for the good care of her child

even though he died last night and the old, weary, turbaned grandfather who has spent the last 8 days looking for money to pay his granddaughters hospital bill and finally has all he needs.

God's love and presence are here in the 4 year old girl who was admitted for a snake bite when we had no anti-venom and her arm became so swollen she was taken to surgery for debridement and against all odds she lived and went home.

His love and presence are here in the unknown African girl child who was abandoned, HIV+ and deathly ill when admitted to the hospital, who finally was restored to health after months of love and care only to die of measles before she could be adopted.

His love and presence are here in the 17 year old boy who fell out of the tree landing on his head sustaining a serious head injury. He was unconscious for weeks, but woke up, slowly was able to sit up and then walk, then eat and feed himself and finally see and go home.

His love and presence are here in the 5 year old boy who was admitted with such severe malnutrition he was blind, unable to walk or talk and died on his 3rd day after admission.

Lord I have not always looked for You in the good and the bad situations I face. Thank you for my Kenyan friends, like Alice, who have helped me open my eyes and ears and heart to Your presence and love in all circumstances for indeed you are always with us to the end of age!

I'm sure most of you reading this have always seen Him in the good and the bad times of your life, but just in case,

Merry Christmas!

May the birth of Jesus Christ not only be the reason for the season but may His life be the Way that we follow, the One we trust with everything and everyone in our lives, the One we obey and the only One who can give us lasting joy and peace. May 2011 bring you ever closer to Jesus Christ and may you love Him with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.

Thank you for being with us during 2010 – your prayers, support, presence, kindness and love have sustained us and allowed us to be here at Maua Methodist Hospital. We are so grateful to God for YOU.

His kingdom come,

Jerri & Bill Savuto  
[savuto@maf.or.ke](mailto:savuto@maf.or.ke)  
Maua Methodist Hospital  
Box 63, Maua 60600  
Igembe South, Kenya

"The Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is a kingdom which does not come with violence and is not built upon an authoritarian rule, but upon mercy and love towards the needy. Those who accept this project of Jesus and want to participate in his Kingdom have to follow Him on His way of submission to the will of the Father and of self-sacrifice." Steven Senaldi CSS