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| **Reflections from the Field**June 20, 2024 |

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| A couple of people standing on a rock overlooking a valley  Description automatically generated |

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| Well, we are coming home! July 10th we fly both out of Uganda and (because of time differences) also land in Detroit!  Home sweet home here we come!  Or is it that we are leaving home? It’s really both. Home is so expansively engrained in my heart as both places.  Leaving both homes is absolutely heart-wrenching every single time.  Landing in both Detroit and Entebbe is completely exciting! These pushes and pulls, tugs and tenderness for both keep our hearts grateful, expanded, and even wandering! It’s overwhelming and emotional and yet we’d have it no other way. We accept this life we’ve built with God at the center and family at the core! It’s a good life, even though it is a unique and difficult one too.All these plans to come home July 10-October 25 have me reflecting on how we are all on our way home in one way or another. We are all shifting seasons, settling in or packing for something to come, planning for future or accepting the here and now. Sometimes we are doing all those things at once. The push and pull of life is felt deeply in moments of transitions. The last couple months have seem amplified because we knew we had our “home assignment” coming up. The tension between homes and the drastic differences between the two places and people therein, have me more pensive than usual.   |

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| Ultimately, it’s our hope and calling to see that all we come into contact with would share our eternal home with us, where there will no longer be tension between where we belong, where we won’t wonder which place we belong because we will finally be settled in glory. This last month, here in our Ugandan community we have suffered deep losses through death and have heard the comforting words of friends and pastors speak of souls resting in peace and friends being at home with the Lord Jesus. Our beloved “Jaja” friend here in Wairaka that we have written about so often, passed away in the arms of her granddaughter (our age) at home last month. We were among the first contacted and weeks after burial the granddaughter and her husband came to our “healing gazebo” to share their story and their thanks that Peter was able to rush to the family home to pastor and care for them in their pain and loss. Makes me think of Esther in the Old Testament and Mordecai’s reminder to her: “Born for such a time as this!” (Esther 4:14).  We’ve each been born into purpose and have a calling and gift to bring to a world in need. We thank God we had such a relationship with this family, to be so close to them in such an intimate time of grief and sadness. We don’t take it for granted. Shortly before this I had lost my maternal grandmother back in Michigan. The one death reminded me of the other.  The community I had here reminded me of the one I have given up (in so many ways), not being able to be with my family in the USA when grandma passed away. I didn’t get to see my own grandma before her passing but I was here with our sweet 124 year old jaja days before she left this earth for her eternal home. The irony wasn’t lost on me that village members came to give *us* condolences and prayers. Me a foreigner yet considered to be among the closest friends of the family. Peter, from another tribe than those we live among, yet a “son” to be called in the moment of need. Glory be to Jesus who knits us together in loving community right where we are. How on earth could we not call THIS place home!   |

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| Weeks after I lost my grandma, we lost jaja, and then the biggest blow was an untimely death, not of a woman who had lived life and whose body was failing; but that of a young friend who lost her life in hospital after a routine C-section. Mercy was a member of our small group that met on Wednesdays. Her death was such a shock that her husband didn’t even have the heart to tell their children who are just 5 and 10 years old. Our church planned the service with family members and Peter and I headed there to support the family and grieve alongside them. We thought we could blend in. I hoped I wouldn’t lose it and cry too much. Upon arrival, I realized quickly this was not going to be easy. The husband asked me to be the one to break the worst news of these kids’ lives to them. Together with one of my pastors, I approached the kids and delivered the bad news. I felt equipped for the work, but bereft at the need to do it.  I was happy the kids knew me and felt safe with me, and I felt no shame in weeping with them as they took in the news. “Born for such a time as this!”  Oh, how absolutely heart wrenching sudden and unexpected death is. The days ahead were rough for us but worse for her children and family. Still, community and our hearts expanded in ways we didn’t know they could.  Our world felt closer and more intimate than ever, even during the saddest moments. |

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| Just before I started getting my thoughts down on paper, I found out from our dear friends that my Grandma Sue had passed away— a woman not of my own blood but a grandma to me like biological ones since childhood. She was a woman of good and noble character and her passing once again reminded me that almost being home wasn’t actually going to get me to a funeral service on time. The compounded losses sent my heart reeling once again. Memories and gratitude flood into places in my being I didn’t know existed! God is *still* growing us and reaching out to us at all ages and in all places.Ram Dass, writer and philosopher of sorts, was known for his phrase, “At the end of the day we are all just walking each other home.” In Uganda, we call walking someone home, a push.  It’s cultural to “give a push” to a visitor who is leaving. This means you walk them to a certain point or junction between this home and theirs. A lovely tradition. I’ve had it happen that I “give someone a push” and end up all the way at their home!  Maybe we share a cup of tea or a story or two and then *they* end up giving me “a push” part way back to my home. Such a typical and hospitable Ugandan custom. So cozy and welcoming. In the Midwest, we joke that good-bye means standing at the door for 20 more minutes after the “Welp, time to get going!” by either guest or host.  Another goodbye may happen after coats and shoes are donned and the car is running!  These cultural nuances are beautiful reminders that we aren’t quite done with each other and we aren’t eager to part ways. Gorgeous!   |

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| If you are reading this newsletter, then we have crossed paths and we stand in each other’s lives for a reason. What a joy that we are on this journey together.  Across oceans or nearby, no matter where we may find ourselves this season, we are grateful for the community we have in each of you. Thank you for walking with us and for allowing us to walk with you, as we journey “home”.  On a practical note, we’d like to connect while stateside!  And in a bigger picture, we’re so grateful we’ve already connected and are still in touch!  Thank you for being part of us and allowing us to be part of you.  We continue to serve and love the Lord, our neighbors, and communities.  We continue to feel the blessing of the Lord in the land of the living!  Our hearts expand with the blessing that it is to be here to experience all that is in store this season.  |

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| Blessings,*Peter and Kate (Levi, Aiden and Eliana) Walugembe* |

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| A landscape with a large field and rain clouds  Description automatically generated with medium confidence |

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| **Click here to reply** |

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| Checks can be written to “Pioneers” 10123 William Carey Dr., Orlando, FL, 32832 for***Peter and Kate WalugembeAcc.*111654** |

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