

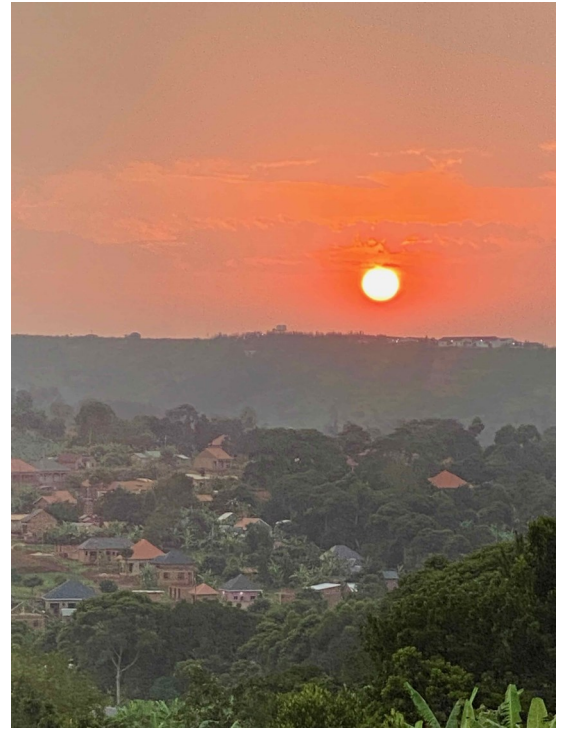
Reflections from the Field

February 21st, 2024

Earlier this week we awoke to the loud speaker of a radio broadcaster of some kind, a regular noise pollution in our neighborhood from a village across the hills. Our entire community hears the news whether they want to or not from this “friendly” communication project opposite our house on the hill. It’s frustrating to be awoken by the crackling speaker, set on a volume so high that we can’t hear the actual words but only the distorted sound across the airwaves. Oh how we often wish the wind would blow the other way and take the sound with it, because 5am is not my favorite and most preferred time to awake.

These last two weeks have been plagued with each of our children being sick one after the other with some sort of bacterial infection bringing high, high fevers, achiness, and extreme tiredness. It’s been a chore just to keep up with treatment and times and pain killers. It’s been a worrisome time but also a time of gratitude. There is a wonderful doctor for our children to see, there are pharmacies with the medicines, there are friends and community to pray and check-in. The kids are now on the mend. Strength is returning. They are fatigued but starting with their antics and joking, ukulele playing and carving, goat and dog time too! So, life is coming back.

Just this morning though, our dear Nixie dog needed a small operation on her ear. She came through just fine but it was a stressor on top of a difficult week or two. Once again, how grateful we are that there is a local vet who is so good with our dogs! This needed urgent care and she got it!



Left: Aiden comforting Nixie - pre-surgery

Center: Eliana and some friends from church, after they sang and danced in the children's production.

Right: Levi trying to carry Benny—our youngest goat on the farm

It's been a lot these last weeks. Right from our Christmas outreach which is full of generosity and time with our neediest neighbors, to church programs we are involved in to reach others with the love of Christ, to schooling for the kids and I, we've had a steady run of good, solid, busy days and weeks and months! Wow! At the beginning of the week when the loud speaker shouted across the otherwise peaceful community, I groaned and pulled the pillow over my head as I said to Peter, "We need rest! Why is this so loud?!" I know full-well there is little either of us can do about it and we believe they won't always announce the news this way, but that day I was way over it! Thankfully I fell back asleep after the broadcast, and found the sun was pouring through the bedroom curtains by the time I woke again after 8am.

I knew I had overslept. I knew I had things to do, sick kids to check on, and chores on the farm calling us all—no matter how much rest I needed! But as I laid there, I realized all was quiet. I heard the steady click-click of a neighbor's garden hoe. I smiled with my eyes still closed, the neighbors were finally back to harvest some of their cassava, good for them. It was passed time to get up but still I stayed in bed. From the direction of the extremely sunny windows I could hear an all too familiar voice of a lady who tends the gardens on the other side of the house. She has a harsh, grating voice that makes one think she is always arguing or upset. But over the years, and through steady observation, we have come to know that she's just loud but not needing attention to some emergency, as one might think when they hear her talking to her mother across the field. That lazy morning, she was a welcome alarm clock. I'd been able to sleep for more than 2 hours after the radio broadcast— a pretty good snooze button! 😊

Now, as I write this, I've had a day of doggie care even as the kids are finally recovering. Besides that, I felt like the days were running together and today was just a total loss. Exasperated and tired I found myself telling Peter, "I basically got nothing done today!" I then headed out in the cool of the evening to walk with the healthy dog around the yard, check that the goats and chickens are safely stowed, and that the gates are locked for the night. Mostly, I just wanted to move after a hot day that seemed to stifle my energy. "I got nothing done."

As I like to do when I walk in the yard (I've carved out a loop with my prayer walks and power walks around the perimeter) I started to reflect. Something about moving and reflection go together. It's my "peace, be still" time. Yes—in movement! I started reflecting on the things we have to be grateful for—many mentioned above. And I started thinking on all the things that went right even while sickness and noise threatened our wellbeing.

This week we felt prompted to meet with a lady we met last year, one who also received a Christmas Blessing Basket with her 9 year old daughter and 23 year old younger brother. Their parents have long since passed away. The brother has sickle cell and had a terrible gash in his leg that needed urgent care over Christmas. Part of the Christmas outreach brought him to our attention and we were able to support him to get emergency medical care. But in the midst of these last two tough weeks, we were able to invite them home to hear how they are doing.

What a gift our little gazebo is as well—a meeting place near our gate. The young man is so clever and caring, has healed well and even found a part time job. The 9 year old is in school, but lacks school fees.



Although she has been one of the brightest in her class, she has recently lost sponsorship with another ministry. The older sister/mother is evidently pregnant and still without work in this community. She is a very special case as she suffers from schizophrenia and has lost one child to an orphanage because she couldn't care for her when she suffered a mental health crisis after giving birth 5 years ago. They have stopped her from seeing her child, which is greatly upsetting. She takes treatment regularly and does very well. She will need lots of care, attention, and moral support as she delivers next month.

What a divine appointment, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to reach out to them and check in. What an intense season they are in and about to go into with the delivery of this baby, as well. The meeting was amazing and we (and they) thank God for it. Dipping back into my own days of having babies, and also working with at-risk-mothers, we were able to hone in on some actions that need to take place soon—birth plan, prescription changes before and after birth for the mental health needs, provision and needs for the baby, etc. It was a joy to plan with them and to be proactive about a coming baby. There were tears, laughter, and lots of healthy sharing.

In these last couple of days we also had the opportunity to give a single mother of 4 a ride home to the neighboring village. Once again, we're too swamped with our own issues— BUT GOD. We've only recently met her and are learning about her and her family, but felt the need to give her a ride home and just see where she is from and how it is. Peter and I took her home and it was quite a little bumpy ride between our house and hers (both nestled in hills). Her home situation looks bleak if you judge from appearances. Abandoned by her husband while pregnant with her 4th child (now 7 years old), she seems to be quiet and somber much of the time. But seeing her in her home environment was beautiful. She was welcomed by several women around, and was joyful to have us in tow as a surprise to all. Her home is a rented mud house. Imagine renting a mud house! Wow. But it is sturdy and the foundation is built right into the rocky hills around. Amazing structures! The seating situation was the rocky formations in a "hallway" of sorts between rows of mud houses. The tunnel effect channeled a glorious wind through there as we sat and greeting over 40 children one by one who came, knelt, and shook hands with each of us. And the view! Gloriously framed by the mud houses we sat between to visit—banana trees and rooftops lower on the hill but the main feature being "framed" was Lake Victoria in the background! So beautiful! When I commented on the beauty all the older children and ladies looked where I was gazing and seemed puzzled! They have grown accustomed to their view, I think! Just like we all can and do! Just today we heard that this lady was so astonished and blessed by our simple visit. She felt so honored that we would even bother to come home, park the car farther away, and walk the little trail between houses to reach her home. Such simple work we do: visiting and caring for the forgotten, the destitute, the lonely, the vulnerable. Loving people with all we've got and more—the love of Jesus himself!



I can't help but notice how I could have written a very different (boo-hoo and woe is me) letter this day. But we all could, every day! It's all about perspective. It's all how you frame it! It's all about being connected to something bigger going on.

We can easily feel frustrated when life gets difficult or when there are bumps in the road (quite literally for us). I felt like I was spinning my wheels for the last couple days as there is much to do and not much getting done (or so I thought). What if God has me right where he wants me? What if these divine appointments could never have come up if other more disappointing circumstances hadn't arrived first! He is still a good God, and he is still working good in and through us! But will we let him in!

I spoke a bit about noise —the loudspeaker announcer across the hill and the digging and chatting in the gardens around us. “Noise” can be interpreted differently depending on how we see it that day, can't it! I was so glad to gain some perspective and pause that morning to enjoy the fact that I have the blessing of neighbors—quirks and all. The “noise” of sickness in the house with routines and school and schedules and chores and all that being turned upside down is one that happens to each of us. But what if God used these trying circumstances to bring light and hope to families in a way we'd never have noticed but for our unique and troubling situation the last couple weeks?!

God is in the details. We feel he showed us a glimpse of his glory and a more intimate connection with both our neighbors and new connections in the community—even in (especially in) the rough days! We are so thankful to be a part of what he is doing, how he is loving, and who he is reaching right here in Uganda. May the “noise” in our lives be filtered through our loving God who places people and situations in our paths at just the right moments—to bless and to receive blessing. May we hear his voice above the din of our circumstances, trials, confusion and even triumphs. May his voice be the loudest in our hearts!



Most of one family--3 generations --receiving a Christmas Basket --



Drive-by gifting over Christmas brought smiles to all! Thanks to all who helped make this ministry possible!



Tiny girl with her gifts...."apple" she said as she carried the first pumpkin she'd ever seen! LOL! So cute!



One of my favorite things about visiting people is the stories of their hardships they choose to share with us! What an honor--to hear and pray with them!

Deliveries of joy and blessing!



Thank you for being a part of all of this! Your fervent prayers, your kindness in reaching out, your constant encouragements, and your timely and faithful financial support mean the world to us! It means the world to those we are serving! We pray it honors and blesses the Lord! May your day be brightened by knowing how the Lord is moving in our neck-of-the-woods. May you find his voice above it all!

Blessings,

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