

Happy new year to you all, we wish you all the Lord's blessing and help at this time. 2020 has been seen by many as a year to be forgotten, and the hope was that this year would be far better; yet who could have known that the coronavirus would have returned with such significance and that the deaths in the UK in January would exceed anything previously? There is but one answer – our Maker. No evidence of amazement passes the brow of the Almighty; not even a falling leaf, let alone such significant events as we have witnessed surprise Him. Alas how sad it is that the widespread hope for the solution to the coronavirus is found in the 'wisdom of men' and not in the giver of the wisdom - our Maker. Through the year our Maker has not changed; his plan goes on apace, and He has been pleased to make the year a means of spiritual blessing to one and another. Who among His people has not prayed this year in different ways and for different objects than before? Has God used the coronavirus to teach us not only how, but *to pray*? God grant that this year may bear this fruit if nothing else, that we are more dependant on Him than this time last year – that would be profit indeed. We desire as a mission to thank you all for your continued support – due to the various means used we are not always able to directly respond with thanksgiving, and we use this opportunity to give gratitude to both God and the means He has used to assist with this work.

The church here has received welcome encouragement in the last few weeks in a lady coming forward to be baptised. She was previously one who mocked those coming to church, and it was a cause of rejoicing, especially for our brother Michael who was one of the means God used particularly to bring her to the truth. Another of our members was involved in a serious road accident on the road to Nairobi. It is a notoriously dangerous road due to large differences of the speed of vehicles and being a poorly lit single carriageway. Thankfully she was preserved with only some deep wounds and is now recovering at home.



The harvest has been another cause for thanksgiving – a significant proportion of the people of the area have got something, although some have got more than others. At the land we have had pojo (green grams) growing and even the other week when we thought the harvest was over, there was still much more to come in due to another welcome shower. In all we have now harvested about a tonne, which is very useful for the food support we give.

Malaria, always a concern here, has become very frequent at the moment. At the time of writing we dealt with 11 cases yesterday, and some are getting very ill. The young children particularly are vulnerable as they progress with symptoms much faster. This is made all the more difficult at the moment due to the strike of healthcare workers in Kenya which has been going on for quite a few weeks. This means all of the public hospitals are closed, and only some of the more expensive private ones are open.



Of these, few are trustworthy, and those that are have become very busy. This has meant that sometimes we have taken someone very sick to a private hospital but they have been discharged simply because there are no beds – meaning we have little choice but to try and do what we would not usually do in terms of treatment. Most of you are probably aware that our own clinic is yet to be licensed as Kenya recognises only nurses and doctors, and we are therefore often left with difficult decisions in terms of who we can help, though life threatening cases we invariably endeavour to do something. The young boy in the picture above is 5 years old and has broken his thigh bone. We are still looking to the Lord for the provision of a nurse or doctor who can register the clinic and dedicate themselves to this aspect of the work and ask your prayers with this in mind.

As a result of the closures of hospitals, treatment is harder to find and more deaths are occurring as the inevitable result. Although in the UK this would be a situation met with outrage, and one in which we would expect to see people held to account, this is absolutely not the case here. The people have very low expectations and even in ‘normal times’ often go away from hospitals disappointed, even with very sick people; turned away because the hospital is full, or because the doctor has gone out, or simply because they don’t have enough money. This week we have attended funerals of a stillborn child and a 1 year old who died from dysentery. The stillborn child was the second consecutive stillborn of the wife of one of our church members. He has been under great cultural pressure from both friends and family members to either get a new wife since this one is ‘clearly bewitched’ or to at least get another one. Most of the village expect him to do just that, and even his wife would not be at all surprised. We were greatly encouraged to see his reaction. Although at the funeral he was barely able to hold back his grief, he explained to us after of his understanding that God is in control and has somehow done the best thing for them. He told us of the advice he was getting, but how he had told them he only intended to follow the bible, and had no intention whatever of getting another wife. Remember him (his name is Gabriel) in your prayers, that God would continue to uphold him and his faith at this trying time.



It has been nice to see the children returning to school here after many months of absence due to the coronavirus (no online learning for these children!). Thankfully it has never really seemed to take hold in this country and we do not in fact know of anybody who has had it at all. Leaving the house at 6 in the morning, or coming back at 5 in the evening you are greeted by a sea of coloured uniforms making their way to school. It is seen as a great privilege here to be able to get education and the children are evidently thrilled

to be back. School is not free however, and fees are hard to come by for some. Thankfully, due to the continuing casual work available here at the mission, many have been able to send their children.

The rains have now left us, and we do not anticipate any further rain until at least the end of March. This is the ‘hot’ season, in which humidity is much lower and the temperature is daily in the mid-thirties, or approaching forty degrees. This brings welcome relief from various insects, but has its own difficulties, particularly tiredness! The evenings do however feel cooler due to the rapid drop in temperature, and it is nice to sit outside for a while.





We are thankful that our library room is now complete. Our brothers from the church use this room frequently, and some others who attend the church have come to read on occasions already.

James and the family arrived in the UK on December 18th.

We had a good flight back, arriving at a very cold Heathrow Airport. My brother Tom picked us up in the minibus kindly lent to us by Elsie's Uncle Robert for the 3-month stay. Although we have been in lockdown for most of the stay, it is something we are a bit used to at the mission! We are still able to go for walks and the children have enjoyed riding their bikes at the local skate park. We have been able to spend some time with my 93 year old Grandad, John Gudgeon who bubbles with my parents. We've also visited the grave of Grandma Gudgeon who sadly passed away last year. The children have really liked asking Grandad questions about the early days of the Roundwood Trust and his experiences of the Lord's protection and acts of providence when taking Bibles across the closed borders. We've really been grateful for a good rest and time with close family.

Elsie has been able to register with the midwife and had a scan. Thankfully all seems to be going well and, God willing, she is due end of June. I feel much better for a cooler climate and rest. I have been in touch with my GP and trying various medication for ongoing sinus/chest problems. I have been able to preach too, mostly at Hastings and once at Haynes and Eastbourne, and have given a couple of Mission updates. God willing we will return to Kenya on March 15th.

Thank you to all who kindly gave warm clothes, shoes, coats etc. before we arrived. There was just the right sizes of everything for everyone I think!

Thank you for your continued prayerful and practical support of the work.

Christian love

From us all.