



UPDATE from MUTARE



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On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came and stood among them. John 20:19

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Dear friends and family,

During this Lenten season we are reminded of Jesus' disciples and the uncertainty they felt after Jesus was crucified.

I am sure that we are not the only ones who can sympathize with them. With the huge disruptions that Covid-19 has caused around the world, with no clear end in sight, many people who were living otherwise safe and predictable lives are now wondering... 'When will all of this end?'

Last week we received news of the confirmation of the first positive case of Covid-19 in Zimbabwe. However, the Zimbabwe government took proactive steps to keep cases from entering Zimbabwe and from spreading when it did arrive. Since Tuesday 24 March, all schools (primary, secondary and tertiary) in Zimbabwe have been closed for an indefinite period. Beginning 30 March, there will be a 21-day total lockdown in the country.



Jane having her temperature checked at the AU gate.

At Africa University, a big issue concerns the 40% of our students who are from outside Zimbabwe. Many of them are on scholarship, and simply do not have the money to go home, then come back again at some indefinite time. Also, for some the journey home means transit through another country, which might have restrictions on foreigners transiting through their land. Not to mention the risk involved

in multiple hours on crowded buses with passengers who might be infected.

Of course, we can't just throw out our students, especially during times such as these, so those international students without other options are allowed to stay on campus.

Some on-line instruction is being done, but Larry still hasn't figured out how to have Practical Agriculture students apply nitrogen fertilizer to their tasseling corn using their smartphone when miles away.

AU FARM NEWS

As I write, the new silage chopper is busy converting the corn fields into food for the dairy cattle.



Of course, the livestock understand nothing about lockdowns, so the Farm Manager has been busy organizing the staff so that all units are covered. With the lockdown that begins on Monday, only staff who live on campus are allowed to work. Past investments in housing for AU Farm staff are proving their worth many times over. We had the dedication for the two newest houses funded by the Illinois Great Rivers conference. The next house, funded by the 1st UMC of Wichita, is finally getting started after many delays.



COMING TO A CHURCH NEAR YOU

Since 2000 we have been visiting supporting churches (itineration) every four years. This will be Larry's last official visit as a missionary since he will be retiring after itineration. Jane plans to continue teaching here at AU for a couple more years, and Larry will probably teach on a volunteer basis.

We hope to thank in person the many people who have faithfully supported us for many years in the projects with which we were associated. Some were able to visit us either in Botswana or Zimbabwe, so literally walked beside us. Others knew that we were representing them even though they never came to visit.

The rough outline for our travels is:
late-May- leave Zimbabwe
June 6- attend the Iowa Annual Conference
June 10-24- Illinois Great Rivers
June 28 begin speaking in Iowa churches *when not out-of-state*;
July 3-29 Attend to family issues
Aug 1-14- Indiana, Michigan, E Ohio, Maryland, Delaware, E and W Pennsylvania
Sep 15-24 Northern Illinois
Sep 27-29 Wisconsin
Oct 10-12 Kansas, Nebraska
Oct 25- Vancouver WA
Oct 27-1 Nov California
Nov 21- Begin the return journey to Zimbabwe

In Iowa and Illinois our schedules will be coordinated by conference mission/itineration secretaries. In all other states we will make arrangements directly with churches that we will visit. We have juggled many commitments, and apologize in advance if we don't see you! We hope that when we are both fully retired we can travel and visit churches and individuals that we will miss this time around.

Of course, the schedule above is still very tentative, pending what happens with the Covid-19 challenge. Most airlines are stopping flights into and out of Harare, so we might not be able to fly when we want to, and of course some churches might not yet have resumed meeting. We might need to have virtual meetings. We will keep you informed.

The best way to contact us is by email: LKies@africau.edu. When our travel plans are confirmed, we will give you a snail-mail address and a phone number in a later letter.



Despite all the challenges brought on by a fragile Zimbabwe economy and now the corona virus, the crosses still stand...on top of the hill above campus and on top the chapel.

FAMILY NEWS

Michael at Iowa State will have at least several weeks of on-line learning to end his second year at Iowa State. He has a summer internship lined up in Ames.

Carly's campus ministry at University of Queensland at Brisbane is being creative in reaching out to the students during the ban on large gatherings and church services

Pule and Christine in Boulder are working from home, as is **Ben** in New York.

Please pray

- prayers of thanks:
 - that our Zimbabwe residence permit has been renewed for TWO years instead of the usual ONE
 - that so far the confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Zimbabwe are very low (five)
- prayers of supplication:
 - for all those severely affected by Covid-19, either from infection or from the lockdowns
 - for Jane and me as we try to firm our plans for travel and speaking

Thank you for your support, prayers, thoughts, emails, cards and letters. We pray that you are kept safe and find ways of reaching out to your loved ones and others.

Yours and His,
Larry and Jane Kies

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