



Happy New Year!

January 09

***Cher:***

Even though we had a fragrant tree down in the living room and rushed round to get our home ready to receive our kids and grandkids, had a marvelous time with them and already said goodbye, it hardly seems possible that Christmas has come and gone again. Last year we were lying low in Nairobi while Jon was very sick. Praise the Lord, he is fine now and had a wonderful time making Christmas presents and being "Papa Jon" to Gabe, Raeleigh and our grand-nephew, Rowan. Our nephew Jesse, his wife Kerri, and Rowan came from Kuwait to Nairobi to spend the holidays with Josh and his family and the whole crew drove over for a week in Uganda with us.

I am impressed this year with God's constancy. It is an odd word but it just keeps coming up as I think over this last year. He has taken us **through** hard days worrying over Caleb, his court case and eventual sentence. My mother's



heart has broken time and again over worrying that he is sick or unhappy and there is absolutely nothing I can do about it. But God was constantly

there with him, working in him and even through his hard circumstances. Caleb has come to the end of the year rejoicing in the Lord, studying the Word, and writing letters to us that make our hearts overflow with gratitude to God!

How sweet of God to bring Josh and his family to live right "next door" to us here in Africa. We can text each other, Skype, even phone whenever we want. God has kept us constantly in touch with even the small details of our lives. I am amazed at how God, in his constancy, has run a thread through the lives of Jon's and my families through at least five generations right down to giving Josh the "girl next door" from where I grew up as his wife. He has been constantly working His marvelous tapestry so that our lives and families were weaving together even before we were born.

In my personal time with Him and in the Bible studies I have been privileged to join in with other MAF wives, the constancy and supremacy of God and His Good News is boosting my faith in such a refreshing and, somehow, "young" way. I feel like a new Christian learning new things about the love God has for me and about His willingness to demonstrate it into my areas of deepest concern and desire. I am amazed that He has always been right here, waiting to open my eyes to all this. Constantly loving me, comforting me, scolding me, blessing me, and gifting me with lessons from the Word that were there all the time. He didn't lose His focus, even when I did.

**Jon:**

I don't know how much news you get on Africa there but this last year we have seen a marked increase in violence here in our part of Congo and the region. There are many rebel groups from different tribes all fighting for their rights as they see them. This area has seen ethnic cleansing as well as the Lord's Resistance Army, (LRA) which is really taking his name in vain. They are noted for their extreme cruelty and using children as soldiers. They go into a village sending the kids in front of them. They capture the men and kill them by hacking them with machetes or beating them to death. Then they take the women as slaves to carry loot and other things. They take the children and often make them kill their own brothers, sisters or parents and then tell them they are so bad that nobody can love them but the LRA. They then incorporate them into their army. These people have operated for years in northern Uganda but have now moved into northern Congo, where we fly. They have attacked many villages around the Dungu area and there are many refugees running from the violence. I flew into Dungu the other day and there were no people in the town. That is a weird feeling. We have flown supplies in to help but there is so much more need. Over the Christmas season over 400 people were killed in fighting.

In the south there is another group who have taken large areas of land, run off the government troops at will and given the UN a hard time. We have flown in doctors and medicines to work with refugees and it is interesting to see the war going on under you with cell phone towers blown up and the rebel force more visible than the government. Rape by both sides is incredibly commonplace and as always the weak suffer the most.

In Bunia, where we have our people based, there has been another group fighting in the hills all around with attacks at our base in Nyankunde where we were before the ethnic cleansing of 2002. We have 2 hangars there and 8 houses. They were destroyed in 2002 and everything looted. We were in the process of rebuilding and had roofs on the houses and were getting ready for serious work. The hospital was operating and we were looking forward to helping the community and getting life more normal again. That base has been attacked twice in the last 2 months. Both times they gave warning of their coming and said their main purpose was to fight the government and not the population. But that did not stop them from looting and shooting up the place and causing great panic. The roofing in the houses is full of bullet holes and we are saddened to think that all the work we had planned will have to be postponed.

**From both of us:**

As we begin 2009, we have a lot of questions about how to deal with the situation at Nyankunde and with the violence in our area of work in EDRC. We are grateful for the constancy of God, His ability to see the end from the beginning, and His faithful guidance. We sure need it!

And we are thankful for your constant support over the long haul. Sometimes we are amazed that, as bad as we are at corresponding, you exhibit that constancy as you stay part of the work God is doing out here. Thank you so much.

2009 looms ahead of us full of possibilities and jobs God has planned in advance for us to do. May He bless you all year long.

Happy New Year,

**Jon and  
Cher**



Nyankunde kids in front of our hangar



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