

Dear Praying Friends,

February 2024

It has been 3 weeks since I returned from my 3 week trip to South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. I want to thank each of you who prayed for me and Anne throughout these weeks!

It was a joy once again to join with our missionary family from South Africa and Eswatini at their annual conference – 11 missionaries and 10 missionary kids in total. Since taking over this new ministry in 2022 as Africa Regional Member Care Coordinators for TEAM, this was my third time to be able to connect face-to-face with this team. We have said a few times that it does take time to build up trust and confidence with our missionaries, so I am very thankful that by and large I felt a significantly greater degree of openness and being at ease with me than at first, which in turn has led to some deeper level conversations.



In particular I had the privilege of spending 12 hours road-tripping with one of our younger missionaries, Kit Tischler, as we drove to and from conference together. We talked (almost non-stop) about all kinds of things, and even sang together in the car. The icing on the cake with Kit was the joy of being able to spend a good part of my last full day in South Africa hanging out with him in Johannesburg, meeting a South African co-worker of his and visiting one of the university campuses where Kit spends time discipling and evangelizing students from the very large Zionist movement of churches in South Africa. This movement has millions of followers and numerous branches across several countries in southern Africa. Tragically, as a whole, it has wandered far, far from the true Gospel and become very syncretistic, so most of its members do not know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Gratefully, a small, but growing movement is afoot, reaching back into the Zionist churches with the true Gospel. People are getting saved, and men and women are being trained in Bible Schools to know and preach the Word of God faithfully. **Pray for Kit** who is a part of this new “renaissance” (re-birth) amongst the Zionist churches.

After the South Africa conference I flew to Zimbabwe where Doug and Nancy Everswick picked me up. Within hours we hit the road and headed to Dondo, Mozambique (an 11 hour drive), to spend 3 days with Nido and Helaine Gonçalves, 15 year veteran TEAM missionaries from a partner organization in Brazil. I had only just met them for the first time a week earlier over a cup of coffee in South Africa, but seeing them again in their own home and on their own ministry turf, being welcomed as an “old” friend, was such a blessing. Almost 4 years ago their region of Mozambique took a direct hit from Cyclone Idai, devastating large areas of this low-lying country resulting in over 1,500 deaths and tens of thousands of homes and businesses damaged or destroyed. Their ministry base in Dondo also suffered significant damage. I was able to hear their stories and rejoice with them as they showed us the work that has been done by God’s gracious hand and provision to restore their base. Amongst other things this ministry base includes a Bible School of 20 to 30 men and women studying for ministry and a pre-school of 60 children, many of whom will learn of Jesus for the first time in this school. **Pray that God** will encourage Nido and Helaine’s hearts and bring fruit for their labors.



It was a privilege to do this long road trip to Mozambique with Doug and Nancy who have served the Lord faithfully in Zimbabwe for almost 40 years, including supporting the work in Mozambique. As I watched them connect with and minister to their team-mates both in Mozambique and Zimbabwe I was blessed to witness a



great example of how to love and care for missionaries. Doug and Nancy will retire from missionary service in August/September. This team has seen a significant reduction in size over recent years with further reductions just down the pike. As you can imagine this can be discouraging/challenging for our teams out there as they face inevitable structural changes and uncertainty for their future ministries.

The South Africa/Eswatini ministry area is also facing reduced numbers by the end of this year with two missionaries retiring, as well as the current leader and one family returning to the US definitively for personal reasons. **Please pray for:**

- God's hand of encouragement on each of those missionaries continuing on in these countries
- For God's wisdom, help and guidance for each one who is finishing their years of faithful service down there and returning home – transition can be very hard for all concerned, both those leaving and those staying
- For God to call new missionaries to serve in these countries according to His will and purposes
- For Anne and me as we seek to support and encourage our teams out there in the midst of these changes

While I was in the summer heat of southern Africa, Anne and the family were battling through a cold snap here at home which included over 10 inches of snow and temperatures which plummeted down to -25F (-31C). We are grateful for wonderful, helpful neighbors and for His protection on the family while I was gone. I landed in Atlanta after my trans-Atlantic flight to learn that my Mom had been hospitalized with pneumonia. **Thank the Lord** she has recovered well from this and for sustaining Anne through those weeks while I was gone.

In the upcoming months we have a number of things that we will be working on in follow-up with some of our missionaries. On top of that is the ongoing connecting with our teams and their leadership in Africa. **Please pray with us** for wisdom, faithfulness and diligence as we seek to be 'present' with and encourage our teams in every way we can, through prayer, emails, messaging, virtual calls and physical visits whenever possible. In late June TEAM is having a global gathering in Thailand of as many of their global workers, staff and partners as can possibly be there. Many of our people from Chad and southern Africa will be there so Anne and I will also attend in order to connect once again with as many of our people as possible in one place at one time. **Please pray** that this conference will lift up the name of God and His Kingdom purposes and encourage all who will attend.

THANK YOU for PRAYING! May God's richest blessings be yours as you continue to press into your 2024.

Rich and Anne Hoyt

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