



The CHALLENGE of Africa

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God' Solution to Save the World

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt. 28:18-20)

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When I am not overseas or on the road, I schedule appointments for presentation reports to supporting churches or churches interested in learning more about the *Chimala Mission*.

If you would like a report, please contact me by email, phone or text.

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Howell Ferguson

A Busy Summer

June is shaping up to be an exciting and active month for the Chimala Mission, as we welcome guests and host several week-long seminars that will encourage and equip those we serve. But before I list some of those coming this summer, we want to welcome back **Lee Wright** who - after suffering from a muscle/nerve injury - is on his way back to Chimala. **Tara, Emily** and **Brody** will be joining him a little later in the summer. Lee can't wait to get back to preaching, teaching and working with the farm program again.

Also, after being away for several years, **Brent Smith** will be visiting Chimala again - but this time with his wife, **Brooke** - to teach a short course at the CSOP. Brent has always been a favorite American instructor among our students as he brings rich Bible knowledge, energy, and genuine love and commitment to the classroom. Having Brook at his side will not only be an encouragement to him; but Brooke will be a great asset to the ladies' "**Future Teacher Training Camp**" with her many years as a school teacher.

Speaking of the teachers camp, **Noel** and **Jessica Stafford** and three of their children, will also be arriving to Chimala as Jessica kicks off the ladies FTTC. As many of you are aware, Noel and Jessica work in Northern Tanzania. There will be several others from Moshi accompanying them.

Brad and **Tanya Bell**, future Chimala missionaries beginning mid-2027, will also be spending several weeks at Chimala. Among other things, Brad will be focusing largely on the farm program--specifically cattle farming, and Tanya will be a part of the ladies FTTC event.

Please pray for these events and for all of our travelers.



Brent & Brooke Smith. Brent, long-time friend of Chimala Mission, preaches for the Trenton Church of Christ, Trenton, Tennessee.

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Howell Ferguson

The Ministry of Presence

Africa is one of those places that is difficult to describe to someone who has never been there. In many ways, it has to be experienced to be understood. Living there creates a strange paradox. It can be hard to live in Africa, and yet it can be just as hard to leave. The challenges are real, and they often push you beyond what you thought were your limits. At the same time, the people, the relationships, and the lessons learned there leave a lasting mark on your life.

As Americans, we sometimes find ourselves questioning assumptions we once took for granted, while becoming more aware of the things that truly matter. Mission work gives us the opportunity to see life from perspectives we might otherwise never encounter. It reminds us that while cultures differ greatly, the deepest needs of the human heart remain the same.

One of the greatest joys of serving in Tanzania is seeing how perfectly the gospel of Christ meets those needs. The message of salvation is not bound by culture, language, or geography. It speaks to people wherever they are and has the power to transform lives.

That is why you have sent us to Tanzania. You understand that people are not reached from a distance. Lives are changed through personal relationships, faithful teaching, and the willingness of God's people to go.

Mary and Martha expressed this truth when they spoke to Jesus about their brother Lazarus: "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:32). Their words remind us of the importance of presence. People need someone to come, to care, and to share the hope found in Christ.

As long as there are people who have never heard the gospel, the need remains. Some are able to go. Others are able to send. But all of us have a part in the work (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Are you going? Are you sending?

Howell Ferguson

Stories From The Kilimanjaro Valley

For as long as I can remember, I've enjoyed hearing and reading the stories of missionaries serving in other parts of the world. Even today, I still find myself captivated by accounts of unexpected adventures, difficult trials, and the deeply moving moments that come from serving others across cultures. I would never claim that my experiences were as dramatic or unforgettable as some of the stories I have heard over the years.

Recently, while cleaning my office, I came across the following article from The Tanzania Torch, one of the last newsletters Mary and I published in 2003 before returning home with Sarah, Seth and Nathan after more than three years of serving in Arusha, Tanzania. Reading those pages transported me back more than twenty-four years to a time filled with both simple challenges and precious memories. I had nearly forgotten many of these stories, yet they reminded me why our hearts remain so deeply connected to the work in Tanzania. I hope you won't mind if I share a few of those memories with you—not simply to reminisce, but to offer a glimpse into the everyday realities of mission work there and to help explain why we feel so strongly about keeping this ministry alive.

Ashers Mbasha

Sunday, January 5th, we all made our regular first-Sunday visit to the Lord's church in Boma Ng'ombe - a dusty village about 50km from Arusha. Ashers Mbasha preaches for the small congregation and lives north of town just off the main road that leads to Sanya Juu. We arrived in the Land Cruiser with only "half a load" (according to Tanzanian standards), seeing we only had nine people including Boaz, my translator, and Evance and Caroline Minja and their little boy, Brent. We invited the Minja family to go with us so Caroline could translate for Mary in the children's class. Ashers' wife, Evelyn was there, but Ashers was absent. Evelyn began to explain that Ashers had been bitten by a cobra at their house that previous Monday.

A few minutes later, Ashers came to services limping with a hand-made walking crutch. He said that Monday night he stepped out of his house around 8 pm wearing his usual sandals. He hadn't walked two or three steps when he felt the painful sting of the cobra bite on his small left toe. He yelled for his wife and daughter to grab the "torch" (flashlight). They chased the cobra trying to kill it, but it slithered away. Ashers told me, "You know, brother Ferguson, the next time I talk to these people about that teaching in Mark 16, I will show them where this snake bite me and make me very sick." The snake bite on that little toe, which put this 6' 4" man flat on his back in the Moshi hospital for five days, made it painfully clear that Mark 16:17-18 doesn't apply today. We thought it interesting that his doctor told him that variety of cobra that bit him was one of

(continued on page 3)

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Howell Ferguson

Stories From The Kilimanjaro Valley (cont. from page 2)

the more deadly kinds. Many people die because they fail to get the proper treatment in time. Cobras and scorpions are some of the creatures that cohabit in the small “shamba” farm in the Kilimanjaro Valley where Ashers’ family lives and works.

Isanja

Very recently we received a new sister-in-Christ, Isanja, a 105-year-old woman who lives near the village of Malula where a new congregation had just been planted. During one of my seminars there, she had assembled with us against the wishes of her Pentecostal fellowship. They told her that if she attended our seminars, they would not bury her when she died. Isanja told them she was going anyway regardless of whether they buried her or not. When she left, they decided to fast and pray. Well, thanks to the Lord, she learned the truth and was baptized into Christ to become a New Testament Christian. Boaz, my translator who baptized her said her previous denomination is now fasting that the church of Christ might go away. I surely hope those poor souls have plenty of body reserves stored up because the Lord’s church is not going anywhere soon if the Lord has His way (Hebrew 12:28; Daniel 2:44).

[Update: To my knowledge, there have been no reports of mass starvation near the village of Malula.]

It’s Time To Go

Even though we feel strongly that the Lord’s church is becoming more firmly planted in Tanzania, the Ferguson family is about to pull up roots and head back across the waves. This is really a difficult thing for us for reasons I could never fully explain. Tanzania was so different for us when we first arrived (as it is for any new missionary family), but it begins to grow on you. The “African factor” that inevitably puts you in “shock” begins to become the normal way of life. You either adjust or you remain miserable and go home. I would be untruthful if I did not say there were times when we wanted to go home. But as I sit at my desk typing this newsletter, I am reminded of why I love this country. I hear the subtle sounds of the black African night and feel the cool winds gently tumbling down Mt. Meru’s precipitous slopes. Tanzania, like other developing countries, has its obstacles and hard lessons, but only a few countries can compete with its natural beauty.

Notwithstanding her unspoiled landscape, Tanzania’s greatest value is her people. So many are humble, hard-working and friendly people just trying to exist in an economically-depressed environment. These people have become our brothers and sisters in Christ, our friends, our neighbors. How could I ever remember all the people who have come to us with legitimate needs? And how many have we had to turn away? And yet, the impressions made on my mind will last beyond this life. My prayer is that you will not forget the crying need of millions of these people whose bodies and souls are hungry and famished to be filled with the spiritual manna from above.

[Arusha, 2003]



Sunday morning worship at the home of Asher’s Mbasha (man seated in center with light blue vest) at Sanya Juu, 2002.



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**Howell Ferguson
Forty-Two Years Later**

From time to time, we have the opportunity to visit congregations that were once our "home" churches. Recently, Mary and I were blessed to worship with a couple of these congregations, including the Independence Church of Christ in Independence, Mississippi.

Two things make this congregation especially meaningful to us. First, Mary's father, Malcolm Leath, preached there many years before I ever knew of Independence. Second, it was the first congregation where I worked full-time nearly 40 years ago.

Today, Dan Cates (an instructor at the MSOP) has been preaching there for quite some time and is doing an excellent job with these good brethren. Sadly, many of the familiar faces we once knew have gone on to their reward, but it was encouraging to see others who have faithfully continued through the years. Worshiping with these wonderful Christians brought back many cherished memories and made for a very special Sunday morning.

