

BLACKIEONAMISSION

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School Closing Day

So school closed on the 7th November, and thankfully the rain kept away for the duration of the closing ceremony. Each class presented their class item. There were presentations of certificates for achievements throughout the year as well as some cultural performances. If school has closed - what are you doing I hear you ask? Well of course I'd like to say I was relaxing on a beach in Broome or Florida - easy enough to Skype and send emails huh - I could be anywhere! But alas I am not - it was true there was no water this morning and I finished my shower with my drink bottle of filtered water - that was very real - I am still in Rwanda!

Amazingly I have been kept probably busier then when school is on - did you know it takes a whole two hours just to go to the bank to withdraw money?

I have been writing and preparing for teacher training in January, as well as writing for the college and a two day course for mentoring past students of Fruits of Hope Academy and generally filling in my time - rather quickly mind you!



The joy of nursery children...

This little guy has a real name, called, 'Theny', the first day I met him I walked into his classroom and asked the teacher to explain to the children they were going to see the Dr. It took me all of about one minute to spot this little guy who now lights up my day every time I see him and his big brown 'rotting' teeth smiling back at me. He literally comes running down the hill, arms open wide and jumps into my arms for a cuddle. When our team was here we nicknamed him Dennis the Menace - but he is so much more than a menace he is a new delight and I can't wait to see him graduate in P6 in 2023! During the closing day ceremony his class did their performance and then he came and took the microphone from his teacher because he had yet to use the microphone and he started singing 'This is the Day that the Lord has made' and well there was barely a dry eye in the school!





And then there was Jonathan...

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This young man also has a special place in my heart. I have had the privilege of watching him grow into this delightful teenager he is today. At closing day he came up to me to say hello - I barely recognised him - he didn't say anything at first he just gave me a hug and then looked at me as he bit his bottom lip. You see, he is special to me because I was able to help support him financially through his years of schooling when his Dad was on his own and couldn't afford to send him to school. Mucyo has been my little sponsor boy and I am like a proud Mumma when he tells me he still wants to follow his dream of studying medicine - I guess I'll have some Uni fees to help with one day too - what a blessing! Then we can put Dr Gary out of a job and Jonathan can follow up on the schools health assessments in years to come! This past week I was 'down and out' with a 24hr bug and Jonathan asked where I lived and if he could come around and visit me to see if I was ok. Everyone in this country has a heart of compassion, care and concern for their neighbours and their community - bless him.



It was like an episode of 'The Block'...

Some friends from home have arrived in Rwanda and are staying for seven weeks. Just three weeks before they arrived they didn't have a place to call their home. The above house was one option if it was to be finished by the time they got here, it wasn't - the floor was dirt, there was no bathroom, or kitchen, it was really and truly a building site that had seen better days! After a few options were discussed, it was heads down and this house was completed while they were still unpacking suitcases.

Why am I telling you this? It is a possibility that I could move into this house once they have left at the end of December. Why I say possibility is because while the landlord is a great honest, humble guy, he needs to make his finances work and he has upped the rent after they leave, making it, \$200USD per month more than my budget.

I first thought housing was going to be one of my easiest things to organise, it seems to have become one of my greatest burdens. The market is just like Sydney where prices are ridiculously expensive and expats are paying them so they continue to increase. While this house is small it would suite me perfectly with a room for guests (I have some more



friends arriving in February) and leaving a room as a study to work from. Presently I don't have a work space at home or at school, I either work sitting on my bed or sitting at the lunch table at school.

I guess if you are reading this and I know many of you have already been generous in your giving and your support of me in Rwanda. If you perhaps gave a one off gift last year to help get me here, would you maybe consider another gift to help keep me here in a place I could call my own for a little while?

I have read in a few places today that it is 'Giving Tuesday', December 1st, should you feel inclined to share some of your resources please feel free to visit blackieonamission.com - every little contribution helps - blessings to you as we lead into the season of often frantic times to get it all done before Christmas.

The gift...

I guess if you can't fit the gift into the car - you just ride on the back of a moto, hold on tight and hope that you AND the gift make it there in one piece. This photo was taken through the window of my taxi - yes the 'Dodgy Dujane' taxi on my way home one Friday afternoon.

When did you first use a knife and fork...

So if you are not quite sure of my current living arrangements, I am staying with a friend from the USA who has a 2year old God Daughter living with her and a house help, 'Joyce' who is here from 7am to 7pm. For the past three weeks Patrice has been visiting family and friends in the USA and Joyce has been living here to look after the 2 year old. We have been watching movies at night and the other night we watched 'Cheaper by the Dozen' - I had forgotten most of the scenes in that movie but it was fun to watch it again through the eyes of an innocent adult who hadn't seen it before and has barely watched technology before. One of the early scenes was when 'Fedex' lost his pet frog and the family of 14 sat down to start eating their breakfast with a massive bowl of scrambled eggs in the middle of the table. Well he found the frog - it was hanging from the light globe in the middle of the table - way above the scrambled eggs. You guessed it - or you too have seen it many times - the frog falls from the light and lands in the scrambled eggs - oh the funniest thing was watching Joyce - she called out (and remember that over here they mix up their 'L's and R's'), "The Flog, the flog - oh no the eggs - ooooooooh the flog!!!!" I so enjoyed watching it through Joyce's eyes again.

Another night I wanted to bless her, so I took her out for dinner to Sole Luna, for those who know it well. I didn't tell her during the day but rather at night once she had dropped the baby off to her mothers house, when she came home I told her to have a shower and get dressed we are going out for dinner - well the smile on her face was like I just told her I was going to give her a million dollars! It was lovely to get to know 'Joyce' not the Nanny or the House keeper or the lady who cleans my bathroom and scrubs my shoes - but just Joyce the person. She has a bit of story about her family she lost through the genocide and I think she lives a fairly humbled life. I asked her if she has been to a restaurant before and she has been to some, but not many and it has been about a year and a half since

she ate out (I, on the other hand, ate out for lunch and now again for dinner!). All of a sudden from nowhere she starts laughing and couldn't stop laughing to tell me what she was in fact laughing about. So I waited and waited and finally she held up her fork and she said, she remembers when she was 27 years old, it was the first time that she had gone out for dinner with some Mzungus (white people). She said she was so embarrassed because it was the first time she had used a knife and fork and she didn't know how to hold them, or what hand to use them in or how to pick up her food. She talked about how she sat back and watched the Mzungus eat and she studied how they were holding the forks and then she tried and she finished her chicken using the fork - at the tender age of 27. She thought it was hilarious, I didn't see so much the humour in her story but more the - wow I really am in the top 1% of the world's wealthiest people and why am I so special that I know how to use a knife and fork. For me, when I was 27 was probably the first time I came to Africa - on a trip to Kenya and at 27 was my first time to use a pit toilet / squat behind a tree / sleep in a mud hut / eat goat and ugali - and these are things that she is still doing today at the age of 38.

Kinyarwanda in the Marketplace...

It's one thing to practise your language lessons in the classroom and you think you have it - with your Australian accent - but it's another thing altogether to walk through the market place and try practising some of your new words! Words I can do - I actually have picked up a lot of vocab - it's the stringing it all together and making conversational Kinya the next key. Yesterday I was trying to tell someone that I was a teacher - and she said - "What - you are a blessing from God?" - I said, "Well yes that you if you must!" - the simple accent or change of intonations and the whole word / sentence changes. Some days I love learning language and some days I just don't! (Mostly I do though) Actually it has become a little funny because Fred and some others will be speaking and I will interpret for them what they were saying - and I am starting to get it right and they laugh saying that they are no longer safe because I know what they mean. So now they tell me they must speak in a Ugandan language so I don't know what they are talking about - just you wait - when I am fluent - Ugandan is next!



School Fete...

A couple of Saturday's ago, I spent my day on the J.Lynn's stall selling bagels, donuts, cookies and cupcakes. J.Lynn's is where I work on a Friday and I just love my days doing something completely different. They short on this Saturday due to a big community funeral and some other staff going to a wedding so I said I would help out at the school fete. It was so hot that the icing literally slipped off the cupcakes and onto the tables!