



BLACKIE ON  
A MISSION



# JANUARY / FEBRUARY

WELCOME TO BLACKIE ON A MISSION FOR 2018

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## Fruits of Hope Academy

At Fruits of Hope Academy, we have a new playground for the Nursery section, with the red dirt replaced by some lush green grass throughout the rainy season, we have some very happy and contented nursery children, who have settled into their new school really well.

Part of my role, other than Teacher Training has been to mentor the nursery teachers. Fred's vision is that the nursery section of his school will be a model nursery school within Rwanda. No pressure

much! The six nursery teachers and myself have been meeting each Tuesday afternoon and we have been looking at articles and discussing how various methodologies of teaching are relevant in the Rwandan context and which ones can be implemented easily. Many of these sessions have been quite thought provoking for this westerner who seems to be caught a little in both worlds, what I see and know from the western world may not be ideal in this setting and so a compromise has often had to come into play.

I have continued to train the teachers of Fruits of Hope Academy each Wednesday afternoon, and this year our theme is Respect. We have some new teachers this year who seem to have fitted into the team well and are actively participating in discussions and activities.

## The Kings College

The College - is - unfortunately at a stand still at the moment, a vision based on faith, often means that funds become scarce or run out - so we are waiting for some more funds for the college to be completed. It is hopeful that whether the college is completed or not that we will start training Teachers at the beginning of next term - which is the end of April.

This grace period has actually been one of great relief and a welcome space of 'time'. For a College to open and run well, there is a need for an administrator - one of which we do not have as yet, but I believe there may be someone ready to start once the college is open. In the mean time

I have been using this time to formulate application forms, code of conducts, student handbooks, etc - a massive learning curve for me - but google is a wonderful thing! Again, I am not sure how much of what I think is necessary, is actually relevant in this context, but what I do know about the Rwandan culture is that they are doing well to compete with similar standards to the western world in their universities and colleges.

The actual curriculum, is written and is waiting for us to start training. Fred seems to think that we should start training and then go for accreditation once the training has started, so then they can see what we are doing and see that it is great and will accredited us accordingly, rather than seeking accreditation for something which has yet to start. There have been many opportunities offered to train teachers outside of the perimeters of the college or Fruits of Hope, I have however needed to keep my feet grounded and keep my vision on the college, Nursery Teacher Training is a massive need in this country and everyone is looking for trainers.



## Staffing

2018, is the first year that FOHA has double stream classes from Foundation A right up to P6. Therefore our nursery staff have also increased, but I am pleased to say that the number of children in the classes have dropped from 54 children, down to 24 - thank goodness. This is a welcome relief to the nursery staff and hopefully will be a good role model to other nursery schools as they model their schools around Fruits of Hope.

We currently have an intern with the Nursery section and my long term hope is that she may be interested and have the ability to join the team of trainers at the teacher training college. I shall keep you posted should she work out!



SHE COPIES EVERYTHING!



# Funny Not Funny

Here are a few little stories to let you in on a glimpse of what life is like in our world....

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It was Boxing Day, December 26th - we had had a few late nights already, it was now 7pm and I had Flora in the bath when I heard someone calling my name at the back door. It was the little boy who lives in the house behind us - his parents are my land lords. His Mum was standing at the front door and was inviting us to join them for a surprise birthday dinner for her husband - sounds great - when is it - at 8pm! Ummm - well Flora usually goes to bed at 7:30pm - ohhh please can you come - oh well - ok we will come but we wont stay for long, we will just come to wish him a happy birthday and I will bring Flora in her pyjamas ready for bed! What???? Her pyjamas - horrified - I should have dressed her it seems - apparently no matter the hour, children attend events and they are dressed appropriately! Anyway we went, she was in her pyjamas and we arrived at 8pm as planned. Slowly the very small lounge room was filling up with Rwandans, who at first were all speaking to each other in Kinyarwanda, and then slowly the conversation slowed down and they were all heads down, looking at their phones!

At 9:15pm the birthday boy arrived (over an hour we have been waiting and remember Flora is ready for bed! - dressed in her pyjamas) What felt like forever, he parked the car, walked up the driveway and entered the house - surprise! In the meanwhile, the lights were turned off in the lounge room, and there were murmurs of shhhh, shhhh, shhhh. Flora was 2 and one month - she isn't used to the lights being out for extended periods, neither is she very good at 'shhhhhh'ing! So I picked her up, and walked over to the dining room where less people were, I had her on my hip and she was very good, but also caught up in the excitement as she was now very over tired. As I picked her up she swung her legs around either side of my hips and you would only see it on a hollywood movie, her foot - in her pyjama onesie - landed perfectly slap in the centre of the of the birthday cake - and there was no repairing of that cake! It was totally destroyed!

Everything inside of me was laughing hysterically, the look on the hostess's face - was one of a death stare, where no amount of apologies were any saving grace - the grandmother spoke to Flora sternly in Kinyarwanda and to this day I can only imagine what she said! As I was holding a foot covered in sickly sweet icing, I continued to apologise, wished the birthday boy a happy birthday and slipped out the front door - not sure if I was embarrassed or 'I told you so' - it was way too late for a two year old to be out!

Consequently my new years resolution was - if it doesn't suite Flora and I - we don't need to 'please' people by going!

## All I wanted was wifi...

My portable modem has only been working when it was plugged into the wall, I had two pieces of christmas paper carefully folded in between the sim card and the piece of wire that held it in place, and then a hair elastic wrapped around the outside of the whole modem to keep the battery pack in place - I think one could safely say - it was thanks to a toddler in the house! Anyway I splurged an bought a new one - well not just yet I haven't!

Not having a car one must plan their life around using taxi's and so I have become quite accustomed to doing so. I booked a taxi, went to the internet place, first calling by the local ATM to get some cash because the internet place only accepts cash - the ATM machine was down wasn't it - of course! Ok - I enter the internet shop - do you only take cash - yes - but you can pay via mobile money or you can just take it and we can credit it to you and you can pay later - really? Ok well - I called you on Saturday and I am here to collect my new modem - oh we are out - we just sold the last one this morning (this is 9am Monday morning!) Really - yes - but she is coming - 30 minutes - you wait - no - I am not waiting (I have learnt a long time ago that 30 minutes is not 30 minutes!) I am going out today and I will come back at 3:30pm and you have it ready for then and I will get cash - ok - good day!

So you can imagine my anticipation - I have a wallet full of cash to pay for this modem - I have now paid for two taxis and I walk in ready to hand over the money - oh she is coming - you wait - maybe 30 minutes!!!! Nooooo - you phone me and tell me when you have the modem and I will come back - because now I need to be home so my Nanny can finish her day!

Another day passed - they didn't call me - when I was at school and my wifi, the school wifi and Fred's wifi all were not working - I called the shop and said is my modem in - oooh yes it is here - aaaaagh - why didn't you call me!!! Another taxi into town - and people ask me how do I fill in my days - sometimes - just sometimes they are filled in by doing not very much that takes the longest times!



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### Did you know...

Living in Kigali, Rwanda as an expat can be very expensive?

Especially when you need to buy nappies or diapers - I bought some last week and they cost me \$134AUD for about 80 nappies, I cringe because I know at home I could get the same things for about \$20AUD.

In the past there has been a shortage of butter, and so now the cost of butter has increased to around \$6.40AUD for about 250gram, and I don't even refer to butter as a luxury item, we use it every day for toast and sandwiches. My luxury items which I rarely buy these days are more like the finely cut rashes of bacon that cost \$9.40 - they are a real treat, the last time we had some was Christmas morning I think!

Since I returned to Rwanda in October, I have needed to watch my budget a little more closely - why - because my monthly support is down by half of what we are living on. This is a concern as long term it is not sustainable and we are hoping to move house at the end of the year, when my current lease expires. Most houses for rent these days range from \$800 - \$1200USD per month and so this is what I need to plan for.

How much longer will I live in Rwanda? Well that is unclear at the moment, until I get word on whether or not Flora can travel, so until that point I need to plan as if I am staying for a while. I now need to consider preschool and school fees in my budget, which of course I didn't have in my original budget three years ago!

Whether you have just signed up to read our newsletters or you have been following them for a while, may I ask you to consider a monthly donation to our life of volunteering, even the smallest amount makes an impact in our lives. It is also the most difficult thing to ask for because I understand that many of you already have many commitments, so I appreciate that too.

Should you be able to support us on a monthly basis please visit [blackieonamission.com](http://blackieonamission.com) and go to the donate button. And please know how incredibly grateful we are to have you not only read our newsletters but also partner with us in this life of transforming children's lives through Teacher Training.

Many blessings to you all,  
Michele and Flora xo

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