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A SEASON OF CHANGE...

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JOSHUA 1:9 HAVE I NOT COMMANDED YOU? BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE AFRAID, DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED, FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL BE WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.

My first mission trip was to Kenya in 1999 - I can barely believe it was 20 years ago. On that trip someone (cant remember who) gave me the verse Joshua 1:9, Have I not commanded you? be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. And I can say, I have shared that verse with many others over the years and I have carried it with me many times over. When I think my first mission trip was 20 years ago and I reflect on the places I have been since, Kenya, Mexico, Thailand, Mozambique, Zambia, Rwanda, Cambodia and now long term in Rwanda for four years I am thankful for Gods faithfulness and my endless amount of stories of His goodness to me time and time again.

As many of you know, I came to Rwanda four years ago, on my own, with a suitcase of clothes and hair products. Today I have a house filled with love and laughter, dollies, scooters, books and toys. Today I have a little girl who calls me 'Mummy' - a little girl whom God entrusted into my care to love and disciple into a woman who will know and love Him and follow Him all the days of her life. A little girl who will one day have an incredible testimony to share when her birth mother died way too young, and she was nurtured by a complete stranger who soon became the only mother and family she knew.

And it is because of that little girl I have had to make one of those hard life decisions, and embark on a season of change for our family here in Rwanda. Until, I can sort all of her papers and legal requirements, she is unable to leave Rwanda. Therefore we are both here for as long as it takes.

In April, I was approached by one of Kigali's best Christian Schools, to lead their nursery department. Unfortunately circumstances changed and there was no longer a nursery position available. Some weeks later they approached me again and asked if I would consider teaching grade 2 - my qualifications are 0-12 years and yes I have taught the older years in Australia, just not full time. After a few weeks of anxious thoughts about the whole season of change, I did

eventually decide that I would accept the new position and would in fact teach grade 2 for the American school year 2019-2020.

Before I came to this decision, however, I did first seek the Lord in a weekend of prayer and then spoke to Fred - who I have been working with for the past four years. I really should not have been surprised as Fred has always been one of my greatest advocates and supports me no matter what. He said, "when you were talking I felt like I was a man in the desert who was yearning for a drink of water, and then when you said the last bit it was like someone had poured water into my mouth and quenched my soul". He also said that he needed someone and I came and gave him four years, which was longer than he was expecting. He was so gracious in hearing that our every day work relationship would be ceasing.

In coming to my decision I considered the 5CS's of wise decision making, which are briefly...

Commanding Scripture:

On the weekend I was praying about this decision my daily bible reading was from Exodus 4:10 - the very verse I preached on before I left Sydney in 2015 in one of my supporting churches. Moses tells God he has never been eloquent and God says use what is in your hand! The second verse was Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps - the verse I have had on many newsletters since leaving Australia.

Circumstantial Signs:

The School, which is called KICS, Kigali International Community School, approached me - I wasn't looking for a change necessarily.

Counsel from the Saints:

I had spoken to my mentor who said, it may not be what you originally came to Rwanda to do, but you are still in education and you will still be working alongside the Rwandan people.

Common Sense:

In 2017, the laws in Australia changed and for me to maintain my Teaching qualification, I need to do so many hours face to face teaching, as well as attend professional Development courses. Because I do not know how long I am here for, rather than allowing my qualification to lapse, but accepting this position I can maintain my qualifications.

There is only one school in Rwanda where I would really love Flora to attend and it would be KICS, if I am working there, she receives free tuition for her education, this is a mammoth blessing to me as a single Mum because school fees can start at \$10,000USD.

I would be in community with others, rather than being the only one, often isolated in a quiet office, I would share life and community with other expats and I believe it will be life giving for myself and my family.

Compelling Spirit:

After considering the 5 CS's of wise decision making and hearing Fred's very positive response, I felt much more at ease about the offer at hand and decided to accept the position and I signed a three year contract.

So why KICS?

The Mission of KICS is:

The mission at KICS is to provide a Christ-centred, US accredited primary and secondary education that challenges students to excel academically and live out a biblical world view.

The Vision of KICS is:

The vision of KICS is to impact the world for Christ by preparing servant leaders who choose;-

Character before Career

Wisdom beyond Scholarship

Service above self,

and a lifestyle of participation over apathy.

I love the mission of KICS, but I especially stand by the Vision of KICS and how powerful each of those statements can be not only for each of us as adults, but imagine having the opportunity to disciple children in your class to grow up with character before career, wisdom beyond scholarship, service above self and a lifestyle of participation over apathy - thats my prayer for my daughter anyway, that she will know these attitudes in her life.

KICS is not a high paying expat position, in fact it is quite the opposite, it is a humbling ministry opportunity to disciple children through education. Yes, there is a small monthly wage, meanwhile, each teacher is encouraged to raise their own support to help supplement their income. Each staff member is also recommended to have their own sending church and support network from their passport country.

Teaching at KICS will certainly bring it's own challenges. I am very conscious that while I have worked full time for many years, I have never worked full time, in a foreign country, as a single Mum. My greatest prayer is that my time with Flora will not be affected through this season of change. I am trusting that my time with her will be quality time and not have to be time preparing for the next day or week.

As Joshua 1:9 says, I will not be discouraged, I will be strong and courageous, and I do know that wherever I go, there is someone who has gone before me, is walking beside me and gently pushing from behind me - I am not alone.

We would so value your support in our decision for a season of change.

KINGS COLLEGE

So what will happen with The Kings College?

At this stage, it is not certain as to exactly when the College will open as a Teacher Training College. It has been used several times for training Pastors, both during the day as well as during the evenings.

Just this week the college was having some finishing touches on the outside of it and is starting to look quite smick!

My initial role in Rwanda was to write a curriculum to train Nursery Teachers, while working alongside current nursery Teachers and mentoring them into being a centre of excellence in Rwanda.

I will be transitioning from this role, knowing whole heartedly I have accomplished what I initially come over to do. I have written a curriculum which is ready to be taken up and used as a basis for training nursery Teachers, through a Rwandan perspective.

I have worked alongside the Nursery Teachers of Fruits of Hope Academy and stretched and nurtured their methodologies of Teaching and asked the hard questions of why do you do what you do? I have had the privilege to watch these teachers grow and develop into emerging Teachers that encourage and allow hands on learning, through learning centres and play based inquiry learning.

While I won't physically be at Fruits of Hope Academy every day I will know, that I have left a substantial blueprint for them to continue to foster and develop, in the younger years.

One of the Teachers I trained on my first visit to Rwanda in 2007 was Odette, I have kept in touch with Odette each year and worshipped alongside her in Church here in Rwanda for a few years. Odette has agreed that she would like to take on the role of training teachers through The Kings College. She has been in communication with Fred and Fred is happy knowing that Odette is passionate about training Teachers.

Having watched Fruits of Hope Academy grow from the ground up, and unloading bricks from the truck to build the classrooms back in 2011, I know my heart strings will always be attached to Fruits of Hope Academy. I have, therefore, agreed to mentor Odette into the position of training Teachers at the Kings College. I will always be available to her and I will meet with her regularly to journey with her as she follows her own calling into training nursery teachers in her homeland of Rwanda.



2010

SITTING ON THE GRASS WITH TEACHER ODETTE AT AEE IN 2010, DURING A LUNCH BREAK THROUGH ONE OF OUR TEACHER TRAINING DAYS.

Teacher Odette

FOR AS LONG AS I HAVE KNOWN TEACHER ODETTE SHE HAS BEEN A SINGLE MUM OF FOUR CHILDREN. WHEN HER LAST BORN WAS A BABY HER HUSBAND WAS TRAGICALLY MURDERED ON HIS WAY HOME FROM WORK ONE DAY. FOR OVER TEN YEARS ODETTE HAS WORKED AT ONE OF RWANDA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS SCHOOLS, WELL SPRING ACADEMY AS A NURSERY TEACHER. LETS PRAY FOR HER AS SHE ALSO TRANSITIONS TO A NEW POSITION.



IZABAYO FLORA

Flora is a healthy and happy 3.5year old who makes me laugh nearly every day with her funny things she says and does. It scares me that she is now closer to the age of 4 than she is 2 - she is growing up so very fast.

She still stays at home each day with her Nanny and does swimming lessons every Tuesday and Music every Thursday. She will start at KICS in August 2020.

When I was in Australia in January, I made two steps forward and a few steps backwards it feels in the development of her obtaining a passport and coming to Australia one day. I wrote to my local member who just happens to be our current Prime Minister and I have to say I was happy just to receive a reply and a recognition of my letter.

In short, we now have to apply for an international adoption through FACSNSW and NCC in Rwanda. I am not to make any further contact as all communication is now to be through the NCC and FACSNSW. This process will cost me \$10,000AUD and will not guarantee or promise that our application will be successful - but I have to try! Should our International adoption be successful, it does not automatically mean a Visa into Australia will be successful. So each day I embrace the love I receive from my little girl and while we are here in Rwanda we will live our lives the best we know how and I continue to pray and live in hope that one day she may be able to come and visit her family and friends in Australia.

LOVE HAS NO BOUNDARIES



BLACKIEONAMISSION...

A Season of Change...

As we continue to navigate our way through this season of change, there will be some changes to how we have been doing things. My blackieonamission.com website will hopefully stay the same, in that we will continue to send newsletters and prayer letters. Should you wish to be taken off any mail outs please let me know and I shall make sure that your request is actioned.

The giving component of my website, is however, under construction and when it is all sorted I will send out communication in regards to how this will be affected.

If you are a financial supporter of Blackieonamission and wish to cease supporting us, let me take this opportunity to say thank you for your faithfulness in allowing us to serve in Rwanda for this season.

Should you wish to continue supporting us, we will send out how this can be done to all our supporters once the change to the website is complete.

Whatever your role is in supporting us, please know that we value having you in our boat as we serve here in Rwanda. Please let us know what is happening in your world and continue to keep in touch with us. We love visitors and know you are always welcome to come and see what our world is like. We are looking forward to having my Mum come back and visit in a few weeks time, then we are all out of visitors until next year - so come warm our spare bed and visit us!

Thank you once again for being a blessing to us,

Blessings,

Michele and Flora.



The land of a thousand hills and a million smiles.