
We're outta lockdown and back in school...

A little glimpse of lockdown life...

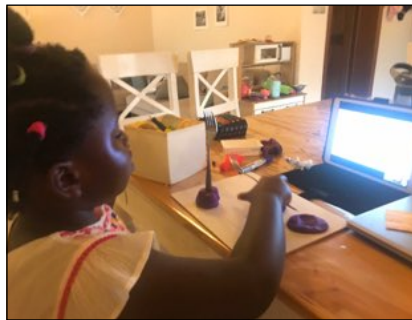
Yes she really does use that big knife, very capably, because she's been given the opportunity to do so. The worlds biggest pumpkin, someone came to our door selling them for \$2:60AUD - kept us entertained for hours and we delivered pumpkin soup to three families and ate it for a week!



Schools Open!

We woke up to the news this morning that we can return to school this week - a mixed bag of feelings about that but knowing that the social interaction with friends our own age is what miss 5 is so missing and can't wait to see them. It has really been 8 weeks since we have been to school - we only went for 7 weeks before a month long holiday and then another month long lock down.

And this time it will be the first time since March since the local nursery Rwandan schools can open - so that means our friends at Fruits of Hope Academy can open too - their youngest grades haven't been in school for nearly a whole year. I only spoke to Fred yesterday and he was lamenting that during the last lockdown he built a kitchen so he could provide lunches for the children. The day this lockdown was announced, his wife Vena and the team had bought and prepared food to feed the children and then at 6:30pm they heard that we could not attend school - so all that food was bought and not used for the purpose it was prepared for.



We secretly love our lockdown time together...

My inquisitive learner finds it difficult to sit behind a computer screen and listen to Mum rabbit on about letter names and sounds and telling her to jump three times and go and find three spoons - to the untrained eye it seems she is not listening or focussed but random little things come out now an then and you think - aaah something did go in. I had a terrible Mother's guilt moment when I realised in Australia she would be starting Kindergarten and that means starting letters and sounds and sight words etc - so we started playing games and learning letters and in four very short weeks it amazes me what she comes up with. She may not sit and write but I tell you there is so much more going on for this kiddo!

You can't make this stuff up....

Our class zoom calls start at 8:00am - so at 7:57am, I'm sitting at the computer hoping that I have everything sorted for the lesson for the day. Flora, please come to your zoom call - "But Mum, there's a bird just flew into the kitchen" - ok well its 7:58am and I'm not dealing with the bird in the kitchen - ask Theogene to help you and please come to your lesson. 7:59am flicks over - Ooooh no Mummy the bird is dead - what? We have a dead bird in the kitchen - Good Morning Pre K!



Once a week Flora goes to music lessons. Her Teacher Miss Barb is doing her PhD in music therapy and Flora thrives under her. This past week Flora took her iPad and completely on her own she read the chords and played them accordingly along to the music - if I didn't watch her do it I would never have believed she could do it.



Look Mummy these look like lungs! Astounds me sometimes, this was after our conversation about how the water gets off the road after it rains - well its called evaporation - and then does Jesus drink it Mummy?



Learning letter names and sounds via zoom with her teacher (oh thats me!), play dough letters are the best!

While we had fun in our lockdown, there were many people who were not as fortunate as we were.

Many jobs were lost, unemployment grew, for the most vulnerable already, this is catastrophic when you have a family to feed. Every day we have people at our gate asking for food or money - every day we have to struggle with who do we help and what is the best way to do that. One of

Flora's little besties, Mum and Dad headed up a food drive for the most vulnerable in their community. They just happen to live opposite the slum area where Flora lived for 9 days before her mother died. So this food drive had an extra special place in our hearts as we know too well what life could have been for Flora and the many opportunities she now has thanks to a break in the cycle of poverty. Thanks to the generosity of so many they were able to make 200 packages and each package consisted of 4kg of peanuts, 4kg of rice, 4kg beans with a packet of salt. They were able to distribute double what their original goal was, because people around the world gave what they had. Lives were changed because they had some food readily available.

Matthew 25:35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.



I realise this is a very Flora heavy newsletter - but seriously we haven't left the house, its just been me and her so theres not much else to talk about!

While I have your attention I will share with you that last week we continued to receive some very positive news from Australia. As part of our Intercountry adoption process, my Mum and Dad in Australia had to have a house safety inspection, when Mum saw the photo of Flora with the knife to cut the pumpkin, she laughed because before the inspection she moved all the knives to a higher shelf - she needn't have bothered! Anyway we passed the inspection and our case worker, Sally could not have been happier. She told us that their side of the process is almost complete, they are happy to approve us for an inter country adoption and they would only need about a month to complete their side of documents. Remember, Rwanda is not one of the countries that Australia has relationships with for inter country adoption, so this is short of a miracle that we continue to move through each hurdle with ease. Sally told my parents, that our case was so unique she had to investigate it and give us a good go! I am so thankful for Sally and all she has done for us - truly she has been wonderful. Last year we were told this process could take up to ten years, so for it to only take the two years I have been working with DJC is something to celebrate.

What now - we wait a month or so for DJC to complete their paperwork and then they will pass it back to Rwanda who have previously committed to issuing a compliance certificate. Once Rwanda issues that certificate - we have an inter country adoption! Then..... because Flora has been adopted by an Australian citizen and she is a minor, she will automatically gain Australian citizenship and an Australian passport - I can't celebrate just yet until I have that little blue book in my hand!

So what does all that mean - we keep waiting - no real time line as yet - we are so hopeful that we should be able to travel to Sydney some time this year, if not mid year then by the end of the year. Unfortunately the reality is borders are closed and airfares are so ridiculously high it seems so ironic to send you photos of packing food bag packages and then spending so much money on airfares. Kigali is hosting CHOGM in June and so if our PM Mr Scott Morrison is coming to Kigali - I may just have to ask him for a ride home!

I usually write a separate newsletter to a prayer letter, so forgive me for putting two in one this time, bit if you are inclined to pray please pray:

- That the last leg of our adoption process does continue to go smoothly.
- That Australia decides to open up their borders so we can actually fly home.
- That flight prices will decrease and become more affordable.
- For my sweet girls heart as she processes all the bitter sweetness of seeing Nanna and Pa in Straylia, but saying goodbye to her world over here - her Theogene and all her things. Just today she was asking what we would sell and what we could take with us.
- For my patience to continue - this last leg seems the hardest to wait for.
- That Rwanda would reply to emails and work promptly on all aspects of our case.
- That when the time comes we can leave well.

Until we know more - watch this space and thanks again for being in our boat!

Blessings to you, Michele and Flora xo.