

April, 2008

Dear Laban Family,

In this newsletter, we want to touch base with you regarding our family, the latest news on *Congo Vignettes*, and your response to our last prayer letter.

We are deeply grateful for your prayers for our family. Since January 7, waves of sorrow accompanied by tsunamis of grace have swept over us because of the news that our newest granddaughter, Audrey Caroline Smith, would be whisked into Jesus' arms shortly after her birth. On April 7, Todd and Angie welcomed their cherub with open arms and shouts of joy at her live birth. The doctors had given hope for a life expectancy of perhaps 2 or 3 minutes and predicted she would struggle for every breath. Instead the Lord gave us 2 1/2 beautiful hours with little 3 lb 2 oz Audrey. She was free of suffering and never showed any signs of labored breathing. We all (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and dear friends held her, prayed over her, told her how much we loved her, took in her beautiful features, kissed her sweet baby face, explained we would never forget her, and sang over her. Peace filled the room. It was as if we were standing on holy ground; Jesus' presence was so real. Her heart simply stopped beating. Because Angie (our daughter-in-law) became Audrey's voice through her blog (audreycaroline.blogspot.com), people have recommitted their lives to Christ, made professions of faith, and have been bolstered by the grace and mercy of God lavished on Angie and Todd as they have walked down this shocking path. "In the multitude of my anxious thoughts within me, You comfort, cheer, and delight my soul." Psalm 94:1 Amp. Please continue to pray for Angie and Todd for the continuing relief of hiding in the cleft of the Rock, the ongoing comfort of dwelling in the reality of His being their portion, and their resting in the soft breezes of His love and sustaining grace. We praise you Lord.

The entrance of two other grandchildren into our lives has been such a burst of joy and happiness during this sorrowful time. Jackson Laban Smith arrived on December 31 to Jack and Molly Smith, and Gregory Luke Sponberg made his way into the world on March 17, 2008 to Greg and Nicol Sponberg. We praise you Lord.

We mentioned in a previous newsletter that *Congo Vignettes*, Shawn's first book, is coming soon. It is scheduled to be in the warehouse any day now. As soon as we have it in hand, it will be made available to you. Here are a few ways you can get the book:

1. Hear Shawn speak at several venues from May 18 through May 21 where the book will be offered:

- a. First Presbyterian Church, Sunday, May 18 8:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11 a.m. services, 2799 West Road, Trenton, MI 48183, 734 676 1510
- b. Faith Baptist Church, May 18, 6 p.m., 26305 Ford Road, Dearborn Hgts., MI, 313 274 3777
- c. Northville Golf Club ticketed event. Tuesday, May 20 in the evening. For more information, call 810 458 4580
- d. First Presbyterian Church Ladies Bible Study, Wednesday, May 21, 9:30 a.m.
- e. Gilead Baptist Church, Wednesday, May 21, 7 p.m., 12501 Telegraph Road, Taylor, MI, 734 256 2650

2. Help us distribute 15,000 copies of the first printing of *Congo Vignettes* by placing your order immediately. Simply log onto her website at www.esengoministries.com. For an order of 10 or more books, we will discount the price to \$10 each plus \$3 for shipping

and handling. You may have as many books as you wish. Think about giving your books to church mission boards, churches in general to expose the book as well as Laban Ministries to the congregations of these churches, Christian universities and college libraries, mission organizations, relatives, friends, etc. If you place an order of 9 books or less, the price is \$15 for each book including shipping and handling.

If you choose to go through Laban, please send your check for \$15 to P O Box 5133, Dearborn MI 48128. The checks must be made out to Esengo Ministries only, not to Laban Ministries. If the checks are endorsed to Laban, we will have to return them to you. If you buy 10 or more books, the price drops to \$10 per book and \$3 for shipping and handling per book, so \$13 for each order rather than \$15 for each order. We are not allowed to give tax deductible receipts as you are receiving something in return for your payment.

3. Wait until July and buy the book at Family Christian Stores, Berean stores, or Lifeway Bookstores. Wouldn't it be wonderful to get rid of all 15,000 copies before July so that Word Publishing would have to do a second printing before Congo Vignettes even hit the bookstores?!!

ALL PROFITS FROM THE SALE OF CONGO VIGNETTES WILL BE DONATED TO LABAN MINISTRIES.

Lastly, your response to the last newsletter is very much appreciated. We were able to pay two months' salaries to our people in Africa, buy fuel for work at Nkara and Iwungu, send a little money for more cement for the hospital, and feed the 75 students who attend our three Bible institutes from April until they leave in July.

These are the funds we need to get back to Congo:

Tickets for Jim and Nancy

Tickets for the Towers for Jesus Team

Labor for Towers for Jesus Team

Food for their stay

Mission Aviation Fellowship flights into the Interior from Kinshasa and back to Kinshasa
Hospital project funds so we can continue to build once we get there

Staff salaries leading up to our going and for the time we are there

Supplies to take. (We are willing to go with nothing, but this is extremely difficult, and it is really not very practical to go empty-handed.)

Shipping supplies we may be able to take

Sustaining the work while we are in Congo

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Prov 31:8,9

We wait on Him