

December, 2007

Merry Christmas

Hi Friends,

We're back! Thank you so much for your prayers, for reading our newsletters while we were gone, and for supporting the Laban projects with your gifts. Speaking of projects, Laban Ministries has its quiver full of them! And we truly pray that the variety of ministry facets plus the needs we mention about each facet will not overwhelm you. It is a concern on our hearts, but the reality is that the work is enormous and continues to grow in depth and range without our trying to make it happen! A dear friend suggested we share this concern with you and present the option of picturing Laban as you would a pie cut in seven pieces, which represent the departments of Laban: Bible Colleges, Evangelism, Radio, Women's Literacy Center, Hospital Project, Water/Wells Project, and Bibles for Bandundu.

The efforts of the trip we just completed centered in clearing land for the general medicine building. Jim Hulse and Bob Meier of Towers for Jesus worked hard at the daunting task of removing tons of dirt and leveling the surface in order to lay footings for this first building. The backhoe they used broke at least 4 times, and by improvising and having parts sent DHL from the States, they were able to keep repairing it, but the consensus of everyone who went to Congo in October, including Jim Hinkle and Daryl Ounanian was that it will take more than the old backhoe we have to see the job through. We need in addition to the cement mixer we found in Kinshasa, a bulldozer. Jim Hinkle has found one Stateside in good shape, and the owner is willing to sell it to us for \$40,000. You see what we mean by overwhelming you? Nonetheless, it is a necessity, and we ask you to join us in prayer for this tool plus the remaining funds we need to purchase the cement mixer. We are only a sixth of the way there regarding the cement mixer.

Right now as we are sharing with you yet another need, our hearts protectively want to so guard the general fund out of which are paid salaries to 130 Congolese staff, fuel for the radio station, fuel for evangelism, fuel for the workload of all these projects, women's literacy needs, school materials for all three Bible colleges, food for the Bible school students who reside on our campuses, building material for our staff of professors at Nkara, Sunday School needs to continue teaching thousands of children in our area, and a myriad of other expenses that keep this operation functioning. Every time we offer a new project, there is danger that people who ordinarily give to the general fund will bypass that fund and designate their gift to the project instead. We praise God that this did not occur last spring when we told you about the need for three vehicles. But it has happened in the past, and we implore you to pray with us that there will be balance and the maintaining of the funding for the general operating costs of Laban Ministries in Congo and in the US.

Just yesterday, our national director, Pastor Gary Kapinga, called us to tell us the great news that since the new transmitter has been installed in October, we are now receiving letters from far away thanking us and praising God in the highest that they are once again hearing His Word preached and taught on Radio Glory. Their beloved "mama" has returned to them, and they are full of joy.

Remembering Gary's call makes us think back on his life and all he has suffered over these past almost thirty years of his tenure with us. Wonderful Gary practically grew up in our home. He was only 19 when we met him in Kikwit. Led to the Lord by Marcella Smith (Jim's mom) his transformation was like night and day. Just weeks before she died, Mrs. Smith wrote in a note that we should take him on, that he would be good to have around. Gary just about lived with us that first term we spent in Africa. He changed Jack's diapers! He sang to the songs Shawn played on the piano. He and Todd had sand fights. He was like a big brother to all of our kids. We vividly remember the first time he brought his new wife to Nkara, Suzanne, who was petrified at meeting white people for the first time. She was a rock to Gary. They lost 5 children, including a set of twins. Their little darling, Diana, died of hepatitis C at the age of five. A year later, their twin boys died of premature birth. Then 3 months later Suzanne died alongside a dusty, lonely path leading to her village of liver cancer. There was no hospice for her. No pain killers. Just an obscure excruciatingly painful death on the road with Gary at her side.

December is a month of family traditions. Laban also has a Christmas tradition. Each year we invite you to provide a Dream Package for a family. Gary is mentioned to increase your awareness of the awesome, intelligent, committed men and women of great faith who are a part of Laban in Congo. He is an incredible example of such people. We are honored to know him and serve the Lord with him. Providing Gary and/or others who serve with Laban in Congo a dream package enables them to buy cloth for their wives, shoes for their husbands, a little dress or shirt and pants for their girls or boys, a Christmas dinner of dried fish, rice, bread, a coke for each family member, fresh beef, and a special toy or gift for each child. For \$300 you can furnish one of our overseas families with a feast and a wonderful gift day. Your Dream Package will go a long way to lift the hearts of wonderful staff members who serve the Lord in Laban. The Lord bless you as you contemplate making a huge difference in the life of a servant of Christ in Congo, Africa.

Servants of Christ,