

July, 2008

Dear Laban Family,

Family is what you are. Your beautiful cards and notes, and especially your prayers in response to the losses of our sweet grandbabies are felt very deeply. Thank you. We want to assure you that God is strengthening our family as we walk down paths none of us have chosen. The deaths of Audrey and Luke have stopped us in our tracks, and we are grieving. Nonetheless, the Lord is giving grace to Todd and Angie and Greg and Nicol to get up each morning and live life. Greg has started a blog, thelukesponbergfoundation.blogspot.com. It will touch you deeply.

Because of the weight of these days, the Board of Directors of Laban Ministries has recommended that we postpone our annual fall banquet. In its place, a Create Hope for the Congo Benefit will take place featuring three generations of the Smith family, Selah, Jack and Molly Smith, and Special Speaker: Congo Vignettes Author, Shawn Lantz. The event will be held on Thursday, October 23, at the First Church of the Nazarene, 21260 Haggerty Road, Northville, MI 248 348 7600 at 7 p.m. Doors open at 6. This is a free concert.

Many of you have asked what you can do to help us at this juncture in our lives and the lives of our family. One way you can help is to join us to commemorate this special anniversary year of LMI, the 70th anniversary of Dr. and Mrs. Laban and Marcella Smith's arrival in the Congo, and the 30th anniversary of Jim and Nancy's arrival there.

Jack and Molly Smith (our youngest son and daughter-in-law) will open for Selah, who will perform a full-length concert. Angie Smith (our oldest son's wife) will also be present plus 8 of our grandchildren. At this point, Nicol and Greg are still thinking about the possibility of attending. Laban DVD's will be shown, and our family will be sharing. We are looking for sponsors well in advance of October 23 to help us defray the costs of putting on an event of this nature. Your anniversary gift to Laban Ministries can come in the form of a sponsorship or just because you love the ministry and want to commemorate this special 70/30 year with us.

Congo is very much on our hearts and minds everyday. The timing is just not right yet. We so appreciate your continued prayer for our now unknown departure date.

Jim and Nancy