

October 1, 2007

Dear Friends,

It is with great delight and reverent thanks to the Trinity of God that I write and announce that in December, 2008, it will be 30 years that Nancy, Shawn, Nicol, Todd and I arrived in Congo to be the Holy Spirit's hands, feet, and mouth to build, to preach, and to teach there. Our youngest son, Jack, came along 6 months later. God used our children to present the Christ in child form, teen form, and adult form. They were also real and solid tents of faith, courage, patience, and love to demonstrate that God did indwell human flesh for His Glory. We all had our hours of fear, loneliness, mental pain, and fatigue. The question more than once crossed all our minds, "What are we doing in Congo?", but grace and peace and the example of Jesus Christ, Paul, Laban and Marcella Smith (dad and mom, grandpa and grandma were ever before us even until their deaths. Death came close, but the Good Great Shepherd stopped the lion who came in the form of malaria, automobile accident, engine running out on the plane, falls out of trees or from the top of a 10-foot gate, stepping over an Egg Eater snake that could kill or make you very sick, bridges that fell in the river behind as the Blazer or the 7 ton Army truck crossed with me driving after Todd, Nicol, Shawn, Jack, and Nancy and maybe a dozen of our staff got out before I crossed the river. The cross beams were often prayer and faith and maybe foolishness, but there was no other way.

Only two months ago, two villages came with machetes on two different days, 40 and 60 men at a time. Nancy was back in America. The 60 man group told the police soldiers that they wanted to see me cut so they could draw only a little blood—wounded but not necessarily killed. Ten defending soldiers said "no" and got into a fight, but the police were highly disciplined, even while being attacked by the villagers with rocks and sticks. Two shots were fired from an AK 7. God used the disciplined military soldiers to protect me and certain of our work staff.

Also, the two big villages which originally called Dr. Smith to build the station of Nkara would have destroyed those two opposing villages if they had succeeded in attacking or wounding me. Thank God for the military police. The regional government at Bulungu sent another 50 police with the Territorial Administrator and the regional military commander. They were ready for blood and destruction of those two villages. I begged for mercy. It took the administrator 4 days to calm his soldiers down because several of their partners had been stoned, beaten with sticks, slapped, and a soldier's gun was forcibly taken. You don't do that in Congo. They caught the thief, and he may never be seen again. He is on his way to the Makala prison in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo. Often the prisoner dies there. No one was killed, and this time no homes were burned down, but next time the Commander and Administrator said, "You will not have a village left, and there will be many new grave sights for your women to cry at." The Commander warned that he had killed many people. "It is my job," he said. "Don't you know Mr. Jim is planning to build a large hospital here among you for you and everybody in the Bayanzi Tribe? You are fools. Don't ever even raise your voice again against the missionary—never. You have done it too many times. Our officers in Bulungu have many reports about you. No more! Do you hear? If not, your two villages will be destroyed. You will relocate far from where you are as you leave your homes burned to the ground, and your children grandmothers will have to scatter in the forest. You have been warned!"

This mob activity was totally a surprise, but God. . . No one died. Pray for the two villages, Mpena and Mibiere. They need Jesus Christ and the Bible. There is so much else to tell, especially of the military police and what God did in them. They became our prisoners rather than we their prisoners, meaning I could not go anywhere without them. The grace of God does that with His Gospel and the Bible. Man's heart is hungry, very hungry, and when a good spiritual meal is served, they come to eat through their ears and mind. Many tasted and ate the Bread of Life, drinking the Living Waters. This is why people were not killed and homes burned. "Father, forgive them," seen on the JESUS film and also Mel Gibson's PASSION, gave the police the will to not kill or wound or burn, but to give them another chance.

There are four life-changing projects Laban Ministries is praying for, trusting, and working towards, asking the God of all goodness to let happen as He pours out His will and blessings to let us see these projects of faith become projects of stone, wood, water, and of healing and Eternal Life in Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The first project is the Marcella Hospital, a project of 9 buildings including the General Hospital, Pediatric building, Maternity building, Surgery center, Laboratory building, Dental/Optical building, Pharmacy, and Registration building. Total beds will be about 200. The Bayanzi Tribe have 200,000 adults and many more children, totaling about a million people with no nearby medical health facility. The closest hospital is 65 miles away and no transportation, except for perhaps a borrowed bike. Most stay home and die. "Why die in a strange village, even in another tribe's village." Tribes do not like people from other tribes to die in their villages. It brings fear.

The General Hospital is to be built in July and August of 2008. It is 210" long by 116' wide. By the power and help of God, it will be put up in one month. Impossible—but God! We need men to come from America to make it happen. Faith Baptist of Dearborn Heights, MI, a supporting church, gave the idea of 50 men giving 18 days or one month to this project. In time it will be lit by hydroelectricity. Two doctors, husband and wife, both surgeons, both Congolese, are very interested in joining us. The General Hospital will cost \$510,000—in America, probably 10 million. Think, if you and your family had no hospital, no ambulance, no cars, no medicine! We need a prayer force and a lot of donors who will in love and joy give so this project will be real and become a place of witness through the needs of the body to hear about Jesus Christ, who beyond words gives us the best and eternal medicine, the Gospel.

The second project is water wells for the villages. Todd, our son, and known to many in the Selah music group, wants to see 13 villages get a well. Instead of walking 1/2 mile at 4 a.m. in total darkness down a steep path, memorizing each crook of the way, each branch they can access to keep their balance, each root to avoid, standing in an artesian pond to get "drinking" water, and then climbing that same sharply inclined hill with 70 lb of water on their heads, we want to provide a well with safe drinking water. One thing they cannot memorize as they presently make their way to and from the water is the viper snake sitting on the path, waiting for mice or frogs. Some have been bitten. I don't know if any died. If a cobra or large viper bit them, then yes, they died. No flash lights; no torches; just the law of averages leads them on. Typhoid kills many because the water at its source is not clean.

Laban Ministries wants to help as does Todd, Amy, and Allan of Selah. Here in America we turn on the tap to get good, clean water. In Congo, you walk at least a half mile into the deep valley twice a day to carry at least 70 lb of water. In the late afternoon, about 4:30, at least you have light. The possibility of water in their village is beyond belief, especially by the women who get the water because it is their traditional role. So much time is spent getting water, wood, and food, they have no time to enhance themselves by learning to read or having time with the family.

Be a part of putting wells into the villages and for the sake of the women who, after centuries, need a break. In the Bible, wells brought people to God. Let us do it too. Every time the pump is used, the people will remember that Jesus' people put it in. Depending on the depth we dig will determine the cost of the well. By many helping, the wells can be a reality. Remember, Jesus was not absent from wells. Nicol's song, Jacob's Well, can help us imagine the ocean of relief that will cool the rocky, hole-filled roads the women and children have fastened their bodies and minds to first thing every morning. Be a part of the water brigade. Just think! Just cry for the women of our villages—yes, almost all of Congo and Africa.

I have shared with you in greater depth where Laban Ministries is heading. Prov. 31: 8 compels me to open my mouth for those who are unable to speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are left desolate and defenseless. So bear with me as I tell you more in the next two newsletters about the other projects.

Servants of His Majesty on High,

October, 2007

Dear Laban Family,

Greetings in Jesus' Matchless Name! This is the week of our departure. We are due to arrive in Kinshasa on October 19. Provided the MAF planes are finished flying Doctors Without Borders and other medical staff into the Ebola area of Eastern Kasai, we will fly up to Nkara around Oct 25 or 26 along with our 20 trunks of supplies, including sheets for dorm students at our Bible institutes, water pumps and drive points, a new chain saw and extra chain for the hospital project, food, supplies sent by Patience Santini and her middle school classmates for the Bible school students and others at Nkara, tools, a new generator for evangelism, Thiessen's Systematic Theology in French, Bible school supplies, gifts for the Women's Literacy Center, tents for evangelism, and more. Solar power radios and **a brand new 2000 watt transmitter for Radio Glory are coming with Jim Hulse!** Praise the Lord for his abundance. Please pray that everything will arrive safely and be in good shape. Please pray also that Jim can get into the interior before Oct 25. He does not want to spend that much time in Kinshasa. Taking the commercial airline, though, is not exactly a picnic. Please pray!

A new school year is upon us. This means that our Bible institutes at Nkara and Iwungu will be starting up as we arrive as well as the Women's Literacy Center. A new mud/brick dorm has been built for the women enrolling in the Bible school, and we are going to replace the present mud/brick building the Women's Literacy Center is using. We will have to deal with staff who called in villagers to attack our staff and Jim this past June, and to let a couple go who have not been upfront and honest in their dealings with us. This is always painful, and we dread it. Their dismissal is so serious it must be bathed in prayer.

The big task for this trip to Congo is to put in footings for the first building of the new hospital. Sites for stones and sand have been located, but getting it all in one place in a timely matter is challenging to say the least! Jim Hulse, Founder and President of Towers for Jesus, and Bob Meier, his co-worker, as well as Jim Hinkle, a retired pastor and Pastor Daryl Ounanian will join us in Congo later on in October. There will be staff meetings, prayer meetings, radio programming, teaching in the Bible school, putting in a new pump and screening for the well Jim H. and Bob M. dug last spring, appraisal of the hospital building project, and other things that only the Lord knows about at this point.

We live in expectancy because that is what God wants. He wants us to be full of hope. He is a God who lavishes on us! He never holds back his love. He is full of provision and He is our completer, our lawyer, our provider, our rock, our fortress, our wisdom, HIS JOY IS OUR STRENGTH, our portion (just think of what that entails), our counselor, our invincible army, our personal bravery, and we are His jewels, His special possession, His peculiar treasure!

Our prayer for Congo once again is that she would embrace righteousness, for Proverbs 14:34 says that "Righteousness exalts a nation." The Amplified puts it this way: "Uprightness and right standing with God (moral and spiritual rectitude in every area and relation) elevate a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people). Please pray this verse over Congo with us. It is the only avenue out of her disturbing state.

Without your standing with us, where would we be? God bless you richly.