

January 21, 2015

Email from Tim via Text to Mom:

After a brief layover in Brazzaville, Congo, they arrived in Impfondo, Congo today. They have a nice living area with three bedrooms, a larger living space (open), and they share a kitchen with another family.

It is VERY hot and humid there. They are hoping to adjust to the heat and humidity over time as it is very tiring. As is the custom in Africa, they do have someone to prepare the larger meal for them during mid-day.

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January 23, 2015

Greetings, Family and Friends, from the Congo!

We made it, after 4 long days of travel! It is hard to believe it is Thursday already as I write this, and so much has transpired since we left Sunday morning. This email may not go out for a few days but I had a moment to sit down and write with sweaty hands sliding across the keyboard in our 'living room', hoping to share with you some of our adventures so far. It is in fact a tropical rainforest here, with temperatures in the 90s and the humidity very high. Though it is dry season for the months we are to be here, we are certainly not dry as we constantly drip with sweat and seek shade and breeze whenever possible. This indeed will probably be one of the harder things for me to manage, as I usually do not do as well with heat and humidity. It is a good thing that we purposely soaked up the cold while at home. I bask in the memory of the 0 degree ski trip I thoroughly enjoyed with Zachary and Joshua the Saturday before we left America, or the cross-country ski exploration I got in with Nathaniel before he left for Camp of the Woods.

Everywhere we look we try to see the face or hand of God along our journey – and He revealed Himself many times very clearly. This extends even looking back to our original plan for the date of departure. If we had come earlier by a day, we would have had to wait extra time in Brazzaville as the only flight that leaves on that day bumped EVERYONE previously booked due to a senator that had died. Dead people take precedence as ancestral worship is prevalent, and this man was a government man as well. His 85 mourners had to go with him, so they took over the plane. We met 2 missionary couples at the Bravo hotel where we stayed for the two days, and they had been bumped and were waiting this week to get on another plane. One of them actually chose to change plans, and the other tried to catch the flight to Impfondo with us yesterday. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful and will try again Friday. Dr. Harvey asked us all to prepare to be FAT while in Africa – a good reminder to be Flexible, Adaptable, and Teachable. The culture in Africa is very different for sure, but this being our third time here, it does indeed get somewhat easier overall.

Stepping back a bit, we were all packed up and ready to go Sunday morning. Jack Raab, our friend at church, drove us in a large van offered by our other friends Tom and Judy Marsh. We made it easily to the border having dry roads without ice and even that I did not take for granted – remember the 7 foot of snow in November? I thank the Lord for allowing us good travel from the start. Border crossing was met with a long line, but the guard was lenient and only asked a few basic questions. He came to the side door and looked inside but only to match up each passport with their respective persons. We enjoyed a break at Panera Bread in Toronto, then were let off at the airport. Check in went well, and the extensive time I spent carefully packing, weighing, repacking and reweighing the luggage paid off. They were all just under the 23kg max! They even weighed our carry on pieces, which I hadn't expected, but they were given approval as

well. The flight to Paris was uneventful, and since we each only slept fitfully, we were quite tired in the morning but made it through their airport quite easily, meeting up with Sephora Campoy, a French 3rd year medical student who was booked on the same flight as us so we could travel with her for both our benefit. Even that was a blessing from the Lord, as she was very helpful for us in translating, and I know we were a comfort for her as a young female traveling to Africa alone for the first time. I have purposely been placing this trip in His hands, trusting Him to be present with us and guide us along the way, and it is things like this that to me reveals His presence in a very real way.

At Bravo, the 'hotel' guest house in Brazzaville in the Congo (remember, Republic of Congo, not the Democratic Republic of Congo) had plenty of space for us and 2 other missionary couples. Our FAT 'muscle' had stretched immediately as the meal situation that was to be planned was non-existent, as the woman who usually manage them broke her leg. We had no idea what to do, but fortunately the 2 couples who had been there a day already helped us by sharing some of their food and taking us to the 'container' down the street to buy some eggs at least. At least we had beds to sleep in and showers to take – though the electricity went off all day so we had no water and no lights. They finally turned on a generator at night for us. Fortunately I had all day in the natural light to pack and repack things again since we could only take ONE of our luggage pieces per person and it had to be under 20 kg for this in-country flight. We had to choose what would stay there and what would come with us – to hopefully meet up with us Friday on a separate flight, which is sent as cargo and paid for by the kg. If you get this Friday morning, please join us in prayer that these pieces of luggage will make it safely here –as it is not only some of our daily living items, but many medical supplies for the hospital.

Our sleep was challenging, but we did get up very early Wednesday morning despite heavy jet lag, and made it to the airport in time. By the way, that is easy to write, but you must remember it was not necessarily simple. Packing 6 people plus a driver, plus 6 luggage pieces and 6 carry ons into a jeep type vehicle is rather tight – but nothing compared to the same vehicle carrying all that plus 6 more full suitcases as we did leaving the airport when we arrived there! That was quite the ride! Back at the airport we waited for a couple hours while our 'travel agent' walked around with our tickets and convinced the flight people to accept us. It is rather chaotic at the airport, and lines are merely a suggestion it seems as they quickly deteriorate into a giant push. We made it through, however, and went to the gate listed and no one was there but one person who confirmed they were going to Impfondo. Minutes later though we were taken to the entire opposite end of the airport, shuttled on a bus and out to the plane. Praise God we made it on that flight.

I'm probably getting too winded here but it is nice to share our experiences. The remainder of the day included meeting Joe at the airport who successfully retrieved our passports from the guards who took them on our arrival; another tight squeeze into a Dodge Dakota back to a delicious lunch of crocodile spaghetti sauce on noodles with French bread and mangos, papaya and lime at the Harveys home; exploring and settling in to our new home for the next 68 days; learning how to fill a bucket while we use the toilet so we can flush using that water when done; unpacking all out stuff in little spaces; having a meal of squash soup with our new neighbors for supper; watching the soccer game on a satellite TV in that home (the only one around here with that); killing cockroaches and all kind of critters that apparently will be our live-in companions for our time here; trying to remember our malaria medicine nightly; and much more. Today was my first day in the hospital and Joe had me perform a D&C on a young teenager; by God's grace that technique came back nicely as it has been 8 years since I did them in Zambia. Other than that my medical work will begin tomorrow and next week more heavily. God is good. We are searching to know Him more fully while here and He is revealing Himself in many ways. I am weak, and readily fall back into fear of the

unknown and thought patterns that are not pleasing to Him. But He is good and kind and has been teaching me along the way. It is neat to see Zachary flourish here at new experiences and try out his French – which is another challenge I didn't mention: being immersed in another language can be rather isolating.

Jennifer has been doing quite well I think adjusting to being flexible and having an attitude of trust as well. Joshua has been going along with the flow and played soccer twice now with Noah, Dr. Harvey's son. It looks like they might be able to have him on their local team. Olivia is struggling with the heat, headaches, and is very homesick.

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A short note from Jennifer ...

Mbote! Bonne soire! Life here from a womans point of view- cockroaches, giant wasps, tiny scorpions, snakes seeking water as it is now the dry season, mosquitos, teeny ants everywhere, limited electricity, filtered water, unintelligible languages all around you, homesickness, HOT and humid weather, concrete floors, cold showers...it brings out the pioneer spirit in all of us again!

But we DO have shelter, clean water, food, market shops, cooking gas, a toilet, a roof, malaria prophylaxis, a wonderful community, beautiful rain forest, weaver birds but most of all we have the love of Jesus and the promise of his spirit to help us not only endure but to thrive as we seek to bless others here! Thank you for your prayers!

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Thank you all again for the support you have given us, and the prayers that you have offered for us on this journey. We greatly appreciate them and this opportunity to serve at Pioneer Christian Hospital, and have found our memory verse to be true – 'So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.' Isaiah 41:10.

Blessings ,
Tim

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January 27, 2015

In case I can't get an update on Friday out in time, can you send an email requesting people to pray for all serving at Pioneer Christian Hospital this Saturday? There is an African Cup soccer tournament playing this time of year -- and Congo has made it quite far along through the first rounds. This Saturday they are now lined up to play DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo -- we are Congo Brazzaville) in an elimination round. There are warnings from all over that this may be threatening to anyone in the country as either way, whoever wins, there will be a high likelihood of much violence and riots throughout the countries after the game, including here as we have many refugees from DRC that 'live' here but still maintain a sense of loyalty for their homeland across the river, and there is a great sense of rivalry against each other. Please pray for the reaction to be limited and all kept safe.

I hope to send an update later in the week otherwise. God is good.

Blessings
Tim

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January 30, 2015

Mbote! Bon Joire!

Greetings family and friends! Another week has passed as I write this and the Lord our God has been faithful as He promises. Staffing has been low with 2 regular doctors away, and Dr. Harvey has been having other duties leaving me alone or with Dr. Tenpenny, who has been here for a year and leaves in April for the States so that he and his wife can deliver their third child in June. That has been a significant challenge for me – quite uncomfortable having to try to care for the patients when I don't speak the language and haven't had time to really learn the standard treatments yet. I have had help with French translations via a 3rd year medical student from France who is here for 6 months, and intermittently a hired Congolese man named Charles, with limited English but solid in his French and Lingala, the native dialect here.

Even so, things did get quite difficult for me yesterday as I felt overwhelmed with the care that was needed while being extremely limited in my abilities, feeling quite inadequate for the tasks at hand. I was calling out to God trying to fight the fears that were rising, and He answered through our Wednesday team meeting in the afternoon, when I was at the peak of my emotions. Sarah Spear, an endearing 30+ year veteran missionary nurse, shared an excerpt from Max Lucado's, Fearless, and it really struck home. How big is my God and who/what should I fear? Peter, James and John had been living with Jesus and saw him as a man, and over time started seeing he was the Christ, the Son of God, but even that was still limited in their minds until Jesus revealed to them his full glory on the mountain. He *is* God, and is to be feared. But that fear is in awe of His holiness. He has given us His Son as our savior, and through Jesus we can become His children in a loving relationship with this holy God. With Him as our Father, all other fears can fade. Jesus had calmed their fears after seeing his glory. I was trying to process this later when He answered me directly by giving me some unexpected, dedicated one-on-one time with Dr. Harvey after the meeting. This was God in action as Joe helped to bring some perspective to the situation. I was able to get a good night sleep, and today went much better. Praise to God!

On a lighter note, I need to clear up a couple emails that I saw mentioning that they were glad we had 'nice accommodations'. The word 'nice' I would suggest to you is a relative term for sure! If you enjoy having lights that intermittently function, a bathroom sink that drains onto the floor leading you to place a small cup to catch the water instead and having to flush that into the toilet, and a toilet that has to be flushed by filling up a pail in the shower next to it each time you sit down, then yes – we have nice accommodations. If you enjoy cohabitating with all kinds of critters like large wasps in the day that choose to explore the ceilings and walls during meals with the doors open to allow some fresh air, checking any article of clothing or towel or shower curtain before using them to shake off any large cockroaches the size of a small cellphone, getting into that shower and finding that a giant millipede the size of your finger was first in line, lifting the toilet seat to find a huge flat spider was there waiting for the full moon, or picking up your book to read only to find that a colony of tiny ants took up residence to feed on the glue in the binding, then yes – we have very nice accommodations. Actually, we indeed are not complaining as we realize this is only temporary for us, and most of the people here have far less than this. Walking out of the compound is as far as you need to go to see the mud or clay huts many people reside in, and even in the compound the hospital buildings are nothing that anyone in the States would even consider tolerating. More on that in later emails, but we can say we are glad to have a roof over our heads, a bed to sleep in, clean water, mosquito nets and a place to call home for now.

Medically I have been challenged with some surgical cases that I have never even seen personally but was able to assist on with Dr. Tenpenny. Almost daily there is a trauma case involving a motorcycle in one way or another as China apparently imported many of them to the Congo but the drivers are quite reckless and untrained. Henriette, an 8 year old girl this week ran away from a dog and in front of a motorcycle and was carried here with her lower leg hanging unnaturally with a fragment of bone protruding. I am

amazed at her pain tolerance as she only cried when the leg was moved! We took her to surgery, straightened out the break in the bones, and placed an external fixator successfully – a device with screws that go through the skin into the bone above and below the break, and attach to a rod beside the leg that holds the break in place while it heals. Pray for her if you would, that she would heal and the leg would not get infected as it was an ‘open fracture’.

We had a very sad case this week with baby Amandine, born 2+ weeks ago and brought here about a week after birth with an oomphalocele—a birth defect involving the failure of the abdominal cavity to close over leaving a large mound in the center protruding above the skin that actually holds much of the infant’s intestines. In the states this would have been operated on within a few days, and even there, quite risky. Dr. Tenpenny did some research and after the baby stabilized, we took her to surgery last Friday and successfully removed the ‘casing’ that had formed instead of skin and muscle, and attached a synthetic mesh that we planned on using to slowly push the intestines back into the abdominal cavity over 2 weeks before attempting to close the final defect. She survived the surgery and made it through the weekend but then unfortunately aspirated stomach contents into the lungs, and after nearly 24 hours of intensive-type care, died earlier this week. I was called around 4am on Tuesday to go over and through an interpreter confirm she had died, provide comfort and some closure with the family, and pray with them. She had captured the hearts of several of the young missionary staff that helped care for her, including our son Zachary, and it was sad to have things end this way. We trust that God will redeem this loss in the lives of the family.

Well, I will stop here at this time, and appreciate your time in reading this and praying for us and the people of Impfondo.

Blessings.
Tim

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January 31, 2015

Tim sends word that DRC won the soccer game today and the Republic of Congo lost. They are doing okay. Army men came to town before the game. Brazzaville had lockdown at 3pm. Thank you all for your prayers. Please continue.

Blessings

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February 6, 2015

Greetings from the Congo:
Mbote! Nsango nini? Malamu. (Lingala)
Bon jour. Comment sa va? Sa va. (French)

This week has been a week of learning more Lingala for me, and Zachary has been learning more French. Daily this is what we hear for greetings, as Lingala is the tribal language mainly spoken here, and French is the trade language, given that the Congo was a French colony until the 1960s. So it is quite challenging speaking only English here, and hearing a mixture of at least two other languages surrounding you! Sometimes the same person will mix the two in the same sentence, which is all the

more confounding. I do have an interpreter, Charles, who is here at various times during the day for me, but not always consistent in his timing. But overall, he has been of help as I try to round on or admit patients during the day. And this week, I had him give me some Lingala lessons in the afternoon when there was a lull in patient activity.

If you have never experienced immersion into another culture and language, it is probably hard to understand the isolation this can cause you to feel. On rounds, in chapel, in team meetings or just walking in the market and hearing what sounds like jibberish around you is sometimes unsettling. I can more easily understand the intense disruption in society, even chaos, that must have occurred at the time of Babel when the Lord confused the people by supernaturally changing their language in response to their sinful, prideful hearts! How refreshing to your ears, though, are spoken English words by children practicing little English phrases as you pass by, usually 'how are you?' A lighthearted 'I'm fine, how are you?' brings a bubbly laugh as they run away.

This past weekend we were blessed with the opportunity to take a ride to the nearest town called Dongou, a drive of about 50 km which takes at least an hour given the condition of the road. The first half was slow going as we had to continually swerve to avoid huge potholes. In fact, we were told that in Africa, drunk drivers are the ones to drive straight! We rode with Sarah Speer mentioned in an earlier email, the spry, 61 year old single missionary who has been here for 30+ years we affectionately call the local Mother Theresa! She has a heart of gold and is always finding someone in need to help, including stuffing 3-4 or more locals in the back of our already hot and steamy land rover along with their loads they carry, in order to give them a ride to their nearest destination. This trip even included becoming an ambulance for a young woman with a fever of 105 she found in Dongou, to get her to their local government hospital. On our return trip, stopping to load a bundle of 15 foot long poles from the rainforest on top of the rover to take to her friend in Impfondo did not even come as a surprise.

The trip was an opportunity for visiting missionaries Paul and Diane Ohlin to visit the Bible training center that they had helped start in the 1990s when they were here at the same time as when Dr. Joe and Becky Harvey arrived in the Congo. He shared that years ago they were driving through Dongou past a school and stopped to ask a student where they could initiate a Bible study with the people. God led them to the right person, as that student responded with 'right here!' This man actually went on to become one of the first Christians in the community and is a loyal pastor to this date. Stories like that are so encouraging to see God at work so clearly.

While Paul worked with the 13 Bible students who are about to graduate after 5 years of training, we had the privilege of spending time on the edge of the river with a large group of people including many little ones, half of whom were clothed the way they were born! We first had fun getting a ride being poled up the river in a large dugout canoe, where we passed an actual motorboat moored along the edge, and further up two men spear fishing amongst fallen trees. On our return, we had great fun swimming in the COLD river – so refreshing to us! It was a challenge swimming upstream with the strong current, and then a blast playing with the native children we finally convinced to join us in the water. One very new experience was a new musical sound we had never even heard of – water music. We saw these two young women seemingly wildly splashing in the water and heard what sounded like rhythmic drums. It turns out they were using their arms, cupped hands and armpits to create air pockets that resounded like drums. Awesome!

After a picnic lunch we were heading out when the group invited us into their church building and treated us to several local worship songs. The music here consists of voice and drums, but very lively and wonderful. They gave us greetings then asked for words

from us – which I gave them, and encouraged them in their great work for the Lord. What a blessing the day was for us!

This week work has been more encouraging for me as we have had a full contingency of physicians. I have been busy with daily rounds and scattered surgical urgencies to manage, mostly related to obstetrics. In fact this morning I had to repair a complex cervical laceration from a difficult delivery the likes of which I had never dreamed could happen. Only by God's grace was I able to repair it. There was an associated vaginal tear as well that gave me the opportunity to teach Zachary how to do his first surgical repair! He caught on with ease.

Medically there always are challenges but pleasant outcomes as well. Jude was a young girl whom I had helped treat since the day I came. She was very ill with malaria, required transfusions (for those medical people reading this, her HCT, yes HCT was 8, which is barely compatible with life), antimalarial medication, and then given her slow recovery, antibiotics to help her over the residual fevers that continued. Finally after two weeks she was sitting up smiling and ready to go home today – praise to God for amazingly resilient bodies that He gives us. Tongo is a young boy who came with severe protein malnutrition, swelling his face to look like a 'moon', along with other tell-tale signs like missing hair, arms thinner than his wrist, and scabs on his knees. Today after just one week of good protein re-feeding, he was hardly recognizable as the same boy. His swelling was gone, and he had a beautiful smile on his face.

Unfortunately, as much as there are remarkable recoveries, there are also many unfortunate and premature deaths. Two days ago we had a 30 year old otherwise healthy looking man come in with what appears to have been a viral cardiomyopathy, with his heart surrounded by a large amount of fluid. The visiting surgeon drained the fluid but yesterday morning he died of the heart malfunction that was the underlying issue. This morning a 19 year old woman who had undergone an appendectomy the week we arrived returned this morning from home and died of what appeared to be a ruptured valve in her heart. That was so discouraging to stand by and watch as she succumbed to heart failure before my eyes, only able to provide simple medications that would not prove to be of help.

In these good or bad outcomes, we continue to trust in a loving God whose understanding far surpasses ours, and whose love is revealed in His Son Jesus, in His Word, and in the relationships we develop. May this email find you knowing that unending love.

A note from the home front...

Joshua, Olivia and I continue with our own daily routine. I have been walking 7-8am and am beginning to recognize faces and enjoy the smiles, waves and greetings. Many are walking out to their gardens in the forest and are carrying babies, empty baskets, and machetes. One morning Josh accompanied me and I almost got hit by a motorcycle that swerved wildly to avoid a broken section of the road! That got our hearts beating! We do school till 2pm with a break for the lunch our cook has prepared for us. We have enjoyed crocodile, fish, cassava, rice, pasta, papaya, pineapples, bananas and beans- all quite yummy!

Two families returned this week and live here on the hospital compound so we look forward to getting to know them better. The Samatous are a beautiful family that have been here since 2012 and run the eye clinic. Joyce asked me to watch her 3 children yesterday which I was happy to do. The kids played ultimate Frisbee on the soccer field with the other young people here last night--fun and sweaty!

Joshua enjoyed spending 3 days and 2 nights camping and fishing on the river with Joe, Noah Harvey and 5 other guys. He came back with a delicious fish, a bit sunburned and with 120 bites on his ankles (we counted them!) Fortunately the itching subsided in a day or two but the fond memories will last forever!

We are working on making some rubber band bracelets for the Health Fair on March 21st for the 60 staff and their families. We will use the colors that tell the message of the gospel and make a poster of the verses in French and Lingala. Please pray that while we are here, we would continue to be FULLY here. Thanks!

Thank you for your support and prayers.
Blessings
Tim, Jenn and Family

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February 14, 2015

Dear Family and Friends:

We trust that you are all well in your half of the globe! It is hard to believe another week has gone by since our last email. Much has transpired this week and I am glad to share some more of our experiences.

As I write this, we are actually just settling down from a rather jolting experience that Zachary just had. I walked into the house after finishing up a cesarean section, and found that Zachary had just been electrocuted! We have had a loose light bulb in the bathroom since arrival which intermittently required adjusting. Apparently it had basically fallen apart, and while he was rearranging its position, he suddenly 'was hit by a football player' in his chest and his right hand spasmed. Fortunately, he is fine but was rather stunned by the surprise and the pain. We praise God that it was not a more serious injury!

We certainly have had some interesting experiences here and one of the more curious ones is being in the minority. Non-African people are called 'mondele', and as we walk down the street or in the marketplace, you can hear the children calling out this word and giggling as we are quite an interesting phenomenon for them apparently. The marketplace is of great curiosity too, actually. It is hard to put into words what you find there! It is about a mile walk from the hospital compound on a tarmac road, so it takes about 20 minutes to get there. In 'town' the buildings along the roadside begin to coalesce into adjacent shacks. Amazingly there are even several shops that have multiple electronic items, including a universal cellphone battery charger that I found to charge my phone that died! You also find a couple hardware stores which were helpful as I needed pliers the other day – but finding the one I needed presented a problem as I rummaged through piles of tools to find something that met my needs. The food stores on the main road consist of colorful shelves filled with canned or boxed items, including the likes of juice, spam, jams, powdered milk, flour, sugar, salt, spices and other various items. We do like to splurge at least once a week on a nice cold juice or soda kept in a little fridge there. Also of interest and quite contrasting is the presence of a TV broadcasting in the corner of a shop here and there!

Going off the main street gets you into the depths of the marketplace on intersecting dirt roads, surrounded by shacks covered with thatch, chickens and goats running around freely, and children following you in a parade while all around natives stare at you while

you shop. Asking a question is done with caution as once you start showing interest in an item, the seller and others with them start speaking rapidly and grabbing multiple items to choose from, making it hard to decline a purchase. It is also curious to see the great variety of items in this area of the marketplace: fresh pineapples that are more delicious than any you find in the states, fabulous bananas that are wonderful and last longer before turning brown, small limes that add a great flavor to the abundant avocados, papaya that make for a great staple for breakfast when cut in half and eaten as a type of bowl filled with granola, fried dough, kwanga balls (manioc root that makes for one of the staples here), nuts, ginger root, onions, lettuce, 'laughing cow' cheese spread, dried fish mounds, blackened fish piles, live fish in large bowls on the ground, chicken cooking on a grill, and even the occasional live small crocodile wrapped with rope for sale!

The hospital has been extra busy for two weeks as we had a visiting surgeon with us, Dr. Eddie Hyre. He is a very pleasant, easy going godly man who has been here several times for 2 week intervals. He brought his skills to use on multiple patients, and to teach the staff while here. In fact, even Zachary benefited as he worked with him on suturing wounds. Just yesterday he left him to close an abdominal wound by himself! It was fun to hear Zach exclaim 'so far I haven't had a chance to practice suturing and tying on anything but real skin!' We were blessed with Eddie's words in chapel, and by his light-hearted personality during a couple evening game events. We will all miss him as he left this morning, and we pray for safety in his travel plans.

I mentioned Tongo in my last email, and I wanted to share an update on him as he touched my heart last weekend. He is the little 5-6 year old malnourished boy who is doing well in his recovery feeding process. During church service at the hospital on Sunday, I saw him walking along the sidewalk just outside the church so I quietly prayed that he would come inside. Sure enough, he did, and I motioned for him to come sit with our family. It was so sweet having him sit quietly between Zachary and I, watching his charming smile as we had him stand on the seat while we all stood during the music. He enjoyed using the shaker during the songs and I noticed he displayed an excellent rhythm. What moved me most, though, was his actions during the offering. As the basket passed by, he carefully reached into the pocket of his raggy pants to pull out a small coin and dropped it inside with his deformed hands. It reminded me of the precious moment Jesus pointed out of a poor widow placing two small coins in the temple offering -- representing her very all given to God, while the rich pharisees looked on, scoffing, as they gave for show and out of their plenty. Mark 12:41-44. I pray that my heart will continually be in the right place as I seek to give Him my all as well.

After church our friend Sarah, the local Mother Theresa I mentioned last week (but had not in fact mentioned the week before as I had thought in an earlier email) approached me and asked if I would go to the village with her to see a friend of hers. In fact, Sarah has many such friends -- as her heart is made of gold and touches many locals here. We have come here to be of service, so I certainly agreed. She, Jennifer and I walked to this 'hut call' nearby, finding a very ill appearing, wasted and disheveled 18 year old girl named Nadege, laying on a matt propped up by her arms just to breathe. Her whole body was edematous and her abdomen large and heavy with fluid, called ascites. Surrounding her were multiple children, older women and a couple of men, only one of whom was her relative, an uncle, all living in a hut with large open areas in the thatch above, and holes in the wall where the mud packing was missing. Unfortunately, her parents had died and no one was really willing to take care of her great needs in her disability from her illness. I ordered some medications, and we prayed with them before leaving.

The next day I checked into the medical records at the hospital and discovered she was being treated for Tuberculosis but had stopped recently as no one would come to pick up the medications for her. So Sarah, Zachary and I drove in a truck with a stretcher and brought her to the hospital. The hospital generally requires that people pay for their medications and treatments before getting them, and since she had no funds, our family pitched in to help to get things started. I did remove several liters of fluid from her abdomen, which improved her breathing. Usually there is a 'guard de malade' from the family to manage the personal needs of a patient, but she had none. So Nadege has become the object of our personal care for now. We have been bringing her food, stopping by for support, and Olivia even went over to paint her nails today. Though there are many such needy people here, and I often struggle with the fact that we can't help them all, we are reminded that Jesus said 'whatever you did for the one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:34. So at this time we give to Nadege in the name of Jesus.

May you all have a blessed week. God is good, all the time.
Tim, Jenn and Family

A note from Jennifer...

Joshua, Olivia and I continue to keep busy with schooltime in the mornings. We are devouring books, books and more books which has been wonderful! I specifically brought stories like The Endless Steppe, Banner in the Sky, and Treasures of the Snow which take place in very COLD climates!

We are always on the lookout for ways we can help out and last weekend Dr Hyre gave us an opportunity to organize the surgical prep area, procedure room and one of the OR rooms. Olivia, Josh and Tim reorganized boxes of sutures according to their needle size and type, bleached countertops and tidied up. I started with the sinks area that Drs use to "scrub in" and don their masks. The sinks were full of dead flies, flying ants and assorted debris. I opened a box of masks to see what type it was and the box was full of rodent droppings! Next I moved to the procedure room and sprayed bleach, weeded through old cardboard boxes with silverfish, spiders etc. to find bandages, needles, feeding tubes, catheters, sutures...

While we were all cleaning, we heard a little 5 yr old girl had been climbing a papaya tree, fallen and broken her femur. They brought her on an old stretcher to the procedure room where Olivia and I were working and....left her there! She was whimpering and scared and her left leg was twisted grotesquely and her foot was 4" shorter than the other one. The attendant had scolded her in Lingala and told her to stop crying. I was able to hold her hand and stroke her little fuzzy head and just be there with her and pray. They finally took her back and put her to sleep so we all peered through the window and watched Dr Hyre and Tim reduce, reposition and cast her femur. She is actually not recovering well and may need a rod inserted next week.

We appreciate getting to know the missionaries and hear their stories! It is quite the international community with folks from USA, Canada, England, Northern Ireland and Gabon. One young doctor was born in India, attended college in Canada, medical school in Israel and residency in Oklahoma!

Thank you for your prayers as we live in a much more primitive place! We miss each of you and pray that God is stretching you in many ways as you trust him as well!

Mbote! Jennifer

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February 16, 2015

Thought I would try to send a photo. This is me and Tonga. He came to church yesterday and sat with me again. Such a sweet boy. I sent him home today. Will miss seeing him but should hopefully come back weekly for follow up.

Tim



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February 26, 2015

Greetings Family and Friends.
Sitting here in our 'living room' this evening I'm surrounded by night sounds that make for an interesting mix indeed! The darkness descends on us quickly around 6:15 pm each night, enveloping us like a blanket within minutes. The thickness of the dark makes me expect a quietness to accompany it. Yet instead, we find ourselves serenaded by the same repetitive blast of music most nights drifting loudly across the compound from a nearby neighborhood. It is a type of African calypso that pierces the night from a loudspeaker carrying for miles around. But if I focus well enough, I can hear the more pleasant sounds of nature chirping loudly as well, including crickets, frogs and other unidentified critters making some curious noises that remind me of multiple cell phone ringtone choices! Being out in the rain forest deep in the heart of the Congo I expected more of a peaceful quiet with the onset of the evening, but that has not always been our experience. Even in the middle of the night when I have awakened, I hear such noises as passing motorcycles, voices singing or chanting, and even a rooster crowing! And speaking of roosters, every morning at least by 4:30 or 5 am we are awakened by a cacophony of these alarm clocks of nature as they start their routine, including the one right outside our window. Somehow we have mostly become accustomed to these noises and are getting some semblance of sleep at night.

This week at the hospital we have had a variety of people to serve. There is continually a persistent run of malaria, ranging between moderately ill adults coming in with abdominal pain from this malady, to children near death with high fevers accompanied by seizures and severe anemia. It never ceases to amaze me how accustomed some of the natives are to this disease, such that they can tolerate severely low blood counts, the likes of which we rarely see in the States. Even more amazing is the ability to provide the life-giving effect of a blood transfusion. There is no Red Cross here, of course, so the system is set up quite differently: to receive one unit of blood, the patient/family must find two donors to replace what is used from the 'blood bank'. I am always reminded of Jesus' blood sacrifice for us when people here sacrifice their own blood for one another, though such events pale in comparison to Christ's ultimate sacrifice for mankind.

One day we had a young 15 year old girl come in who already had an 11 month old infant she was nursing, and felt she was pregnant again. She did not want this pregnancy so she ingested several pills she thought would terminate it. The pills were only antibiotics, so it would not have hurt the pregnancy in general. However, she came in after doing so when she developed abdominal pain and bleeding. Ultrasounds are used on a daily basis here as we currently have no xrays. I have been amazed at the ability of the two doctors who have been trained to use them for such things as identifying not only the usual disturbances like gall stones, kidney issues, etc. but even identifying long bone fractures and fluid in the lungs – things that are not usually done in the States with this modality. In this case, we discovered the girl had free fluid in her abdomen and a mass on the left side of the uterus. This in combination with a positive pregnancy test meant the distinct possibility of an ectopic pregnancy – ie. a pregnancy developing outside of the uterus. Dr. Wegner and I took her to the operating room where he had me perform a laparotomy with his help – another 'push to the limit' exercise, as I have only seen them done in the past. Once open, we found the 'free fluid' in the abdomen was a large amount of blood, and the mass was indeed a pregnancy sac around the left fallopian tube – and sitting alongside it was a little early embryo. How sad to see a life end abruptly this way--such is the harshness of reality this side of heaven. The young mother indeed got her wish, and at the same time was spared herself, as it is close to a miracle that she survived this event! She shared that she did not believe in God, nor know the love of Jesus. Dr. Wegner was able to share the good news of God's reality and his love for her, and I pray that she will be able to see that soon in her young life.

If you remember from our last email, Nadege is the young woman of 18 years who is weak and ill from what we presume is tuberculosis, though she most likely has some other ill-defined disease as well. She is still in the hospital, and our family continues to provide her with food daily as well as company as possible. The way the hospital is set up, each patient requires a guard de malade, meaning a family member who will provide meals and do personal care each day. There is not a sufficient enough staff to meet those needs so this falls upon the family. Unfortunately, Nadege does not have a consistent guard de malade so we have tried to fill in as possible. I look at her situation and find it difficult to see beyond each day, but I trust that God does. Please pray with us that there will be someone in the community who would step up to take her into their family so that her needs can be met on a more long term basis.

Thank you again for your prayers and support. May the Lord bless your week.

Tim, Jenn, and Family

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March 5, 2015

Mbote from steamy Impfondo!

Tim gave me (Jennifer) the job of writing our email this week so spray up with sunscreen, grab your backpack, a liter of filtered water, granola, bug spray, your camera and let's get going!

Join us as we walk from our apartment through the tall grass to the hospital gate, avoiding the mud puddles full of reddish yellow clay that formed in the wake of last night's magnificent thunderstorm. As we cross the hospital compound you can see people spreading out their ponchos to dry in the morning sun, you can smell smoke from the burning of underbrush, fish and manioc leaves cooking behind the "cafeteria", and you hear the deafening noise of thousands of brilliant yellow weaver birds as they flutter and fly about with long strings of grass in their beaks and weave their nests.

We see Mama Sarah up ahead with her warm smile and safari hat, pulling through the gate in the Land Rover. Ladies, hike up your long skirts and hop up! As we squeeze onto the two benches facing each other in the back, along with the bidons of extra petrol and other assorted tools etc, you realize you will get to know everyone very well and very quickly! Mama Sarah offers a prayer for safety and a good day, looks carefully for pedestrians, bikes, carts, goats, sheep, children, and crazy motorcyclists then pulls onto the road.

We bounce along, for 30 minutes, swerving to avoid areas of the road that have washed away. Sarah pulls over at a hut and calls back to us, "Do you have room for a few more?" "Sure!" we respond. We see a whole crowd of women and children come to the road and wonder who will be climbing in. Silly us, they are ALL climbing in! Scoot over, squeeze together, pass the children down on laps and breathe in! Finally, Sarah closes the doors and we count 29 of us! The air is pungent with unwashed bodies, little eyes stare at our white skin and little fingers run through our smooth hair and mamas are nursing hungry babies in the midst of it all. Finally, we arrive at our destination, an Aka (pygmie) church and we all pile out and exhale!

Men and boys, to the benches on the right. Women, children and babies, to the benches on the left. Songs, beating drums, dancing, swaying, preaching in rapid-fire Lingala, flies buzzing, watching the banana trees sway in the breeze outside then seeing smoke and hearing the crackling of dry branches and seeing yellow flames engulf that same banana tree! God's spirit is present as we worship together with the pygmies in spite of all the cultural differences!

Three hours later, we all pile in again and drive the whole crowd back to their huts. We are invited to walk into the Rain Forest with these folks as our guides and jump at the opportunity! As we travel single file on a garden trail, through a cocoa tree grove, we have to pinch ourselves and say, "This is NOT a National Geographic Documentary, this is real life!"

Look, one man cuts and opens a green cocoa pod with his machete and offers it to us. We take a slippery, white pod between our fingers,

pop it in our mouths and enjoy the sour pulp. Up ahead, another man offers us some stalks of green sugarcane and we suck the sweet juices out as we walk along. Women pull bark or leaves from trees, bushes or small plants on the ground and we learn these are helpful for diarrhea, eye infections, cough and one even makes dogs more aggressive to accompany the men when they hunt!

As we enter a small clearing, the real fun begins! One man hacks off a section of vine and hands it to us to drink the water pouring out, another makes a vine swing, the women build a little shelter out of small trees and leaves and up above us an Aka is demonstrating how he climbs trees with a vine around his back/shoulders like Mulan. He weaves a basket, lines it with large leaves, gathers some fat sticks and lights them so they smoke and he pulls all of these things up with him to demonstrate gathering honey 30 feet above us. He swings and dangles and even has a mock battle with imaginary bees and we all laugh together.

Well, sadly it is time we begin our hike back to the road. A few more pictures and a few more hugs for the children and we motor off towards home. Your feet are tired, your back is sore, your covered with sweat but this day will remain in your memory as such a gift from God!

I hope you enjoyed a brief respite as you read this from the record breaking cold, icy winter weather there. Thank you again for helping us to be here at Pioneer Christian Hospital as you support us with your prayers!

With thankful hearts,
Jenn, Tim, Joshua, and Olivia

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March 10, 2015

Hello all,

I have not been able to write an update yet but we could use some urgent prayer.

There is a missionary couple who are due to have their 3rd child in June. They planned on returning to the states in May. Today at 27 1/2 weeks pregnant, Sarah developed severe abdominal pain. I have been managing her case all day and things settled down for the moment and mom and baby are ok currently but they have decided to move ahead with a medical evacuation. They asked me to accompany Sarah to South Africa on the private medical plane being sent. This will probably happen Wednesday morning. Please join us in praying for mom and baby, safety in travel and uneventful travel for us. Her husband and 2 young children have decided to stay here until they can make arrangements to get home soon. Please pray for them too. I will plan on turning around and returning right away once she is settled in to their higher level of care there where she will be stabilized then hopefully be sent home to the states. I would like prayer for the details involved in getting back!

Thank you all.
Tim

P.S. it is ok to share with in prayer groups and church as I got their permission but I would ask not to post this on social media sites like FB at their request.

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March 10, 2015

Hello all and thanks so much for praying.

Sarah has stabilized and we want to get her to a location with intensive care capabilities. At the moment we confirmed a medical flight to SA but it is up in the air as to whether the medical crew will allow me to travel with her. Her husband can't leave the children and he has requested that I still accompany her to Johannesburg.

We covet your prayers for this situation as well as the details for me to be able to return without difficulty! Also for recovery from a very medically difficult Monday with many sick challenging patients, two adult deaths and a middle of the night emergency c-section that I did that was extremely complicated...made it through that only by the grace of God!

Blessings
Dr. Kitchen

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March 12, 2015

I would like to thank you all for praying specifically for our friends Elliott and Sarah Tenpenny, and me, this week as we have been dealing with her complications of pregnancy now at 28 weeks along. She developed severe pain in her abdomen on Monday night for most of the day and they asked me to manage her care given my prior OB experience albeit 8 years ago :) Fortunately I have been reading a lot in my OB book I brought on my Ipad to refresh myself, and I have been putting it all into practice since I have been in the Congo. With a working diagnosis of partial placental abruption, I started her on some medications for stopping Preterm labor, gave her a medication to hasten fetal lung maturity in case she delivered, placed an IV for hydration, and put her on complete bed rest. The family were most anxious about her and the baby's safety so a medical evacuation was initiated. As she stabilized, we opted to wait until yesterday for the 'direct' flight from Pioneer Christian Hospital to Johannesburg South Africa rather than an indirect one through Gabon. This was a blessing for sure as it was an amazing flight.

We arrived on the tarmac of the airport in the ambulance God provided for PCH in 2013, looking quite professional for a bush hospital! We were then boarded on to the small but sleek Leer 35 jet with an ER trained MD, an ICU nurse, a copilot and pilot, all of whom were extremely personable. I felt like I was in a Mission Impossible film set sitting in the back. After she was made secure in the ICU equipped bed, we took off for Brazzaville. Normally it would take 2-4 hours but this jet was FAST. We arrived at Brazzaville in 55 minutes, had a short fuel break and were off once again for a relatively short 3 hr 45 min flight to Johannesburg. En route I was glad to find Rob the MD quite open to allowing me to continue to manage her care as he admitted he had little OB experience. They had wanted to replace one of our medications with a newer one to keep contractions at bay. I was unfamiliar with this as it is not available in the states yet. Fortunately he let me read the product insert as I discovered it was contraindicated in placental abruptions!

Sarah tolerated the trip well, then it was on to the hospital in an ambulance which waiting at the airport right where we deboarded the aircraft. I was amazed how they were able to rush us through a private customs section with no effort. Sarah didn't even have to get off the stretcher! Boy would that be nice to always travel privately!

I was struck at the hospital by the glaring mix of modern and third world medicine. The facility was akin to a hospital in the states in the 90s, but the same African approach to care remains...i.e. no urgency, and lack of people taking responsibility for action. But overall it was good and by midnight she was settled in and had had much of her medical evaluation completed including the visit by the MD.

As I write this she is stable with no ultrasound evidence of abruption, no further signs of Preterm labor and most of her symptoms have abated. She will be monitored for several days then most likely flown to the USA on another medical flight. I do not plan on accompanying her though.

I praise God for seeing him work clearly through this whole process...from the fact we had some good medications at the hospital for her to use including the last 3 vials of steroids, to stabilizing her to allow a wait for this direct flight, to having me intervene so she would not receive a possibly injurious drug, to no troubles through customs, and the list goes on. The praise and glory belong to Him!

I would ask for prayer for my return to the Congo. It appears it won't be for several days and details are pending. I am trying to find some lodging with brothers and sisters in Christ here but so far have been unsuccessful despite multiple connections I have been given. Currently I am in a good hotel thankfully. I am trusting that it is God's itinerary that will be revealed in time. My life's verse has been Proverbs 3:5,6... Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. My return path is His.

Please also continue to pray for Sarah and her family, as well Jennifer and my family back at Impfondo. I miss them already and appreciate their support in this chance to serve a family in crisis.

In Jesus' name
Tim

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March 14, 2015

Friends and family, faithful prayer warriors:

Sarah is doing well and the doctor actually discharged her from the hospital to be medically evacuated. However, International SOS, the company that arranges and does the air ambulance, is now working on the transport details. I can't explain things well in this email but we really need urgent prayer for these details to be worked out this afternoon. ..your morning. Pray that they will allow her to stay at the hospital until she is able to be transferred. Pray that they will agree to transport with an ambulance to the airport. Pray this can be accomplished by tomorrow. Pray for Sarah as emotionally this morning's events are upsetting to her with the onset of this next transition, especially without her husband and family here. I have been intervening with ISOS to push these plans along.

There are an amazing amount of loops to go through for this to happen, but we trust our

God is bigger than all of this and will work this all out for the best for the Tenpenny family and His name will be praised.

Thank you
Tim

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March 18, 2015

Good morning family and friends!

I am at the airport in Johannesburg waiting for my plane. All is well so far, and the last 2-3 days since I updated you have continued to be a blessing to me. When I came here unexpectedly, I did feel at peace that I was following God's will. In fact, I fully purposed in my heart to give my time and itinerary to His leading completely and rested in that, willing to obediently follow where he led. It has been an amazing experience to be at peace despite being in a foreign country alone and having no idea what is coming next. God has tremendously blessed me in doing so.

I was able to help take care of Sarah and meet her every day at the hospital, minister to my host family whose step father is possibly terminal, witness to God's glory and work at Pioneer Christian Hospital to many people including church members but also people I met daily in public, and give medical consultation to several people who asked for help with their current health issues.

God met ALL of my needs and more! I can't even begin to tell you the extent to which the church and people of God here rose to the occasion to minister to me and Sarah. Meals, transportation, housing, and so much more including wonderful conversation and new relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ here in South Africa are just some examples. What tremendous outpouring of the love of Christ did we experience here! I will continue to seek to pay it forward. Zachary is better so I hear...having had a scare with fever and abdominal pain this weekend. Praise God. Jenn and the others are very hot and tired. Pray for them to be uplifted in these last days of our time there. Also I would appreciate prayer for my travels. Again, Proverbs 3:5,6 remain so true to me... Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.

Blessings
Tim

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March 22, 2015

Please let all know Sarah and her family are all safely home in Tennessee now and the baby is well now at 29 1/2 weeks and hopefully will not deliver until closer to her June due date.

Thanks for all of the prayer support!
Tim

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March 24, 2015

Greetings!

I thought you all might enjoy a fun picture of what showed up yesterday outside the 'ER', looking like someone was coming to stay a while! FYI vehicles drive around packed well beyond capacity with goods and people.

As it drove away after unloading its passengers, I heard an unusual noise coming from the truck. Look closely and you will see which passenger remained on the roof! Ha! Hope all are well. It is hard to believe that we are nearly at the end of our time here. Blessings

Tim and family





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March 30, 2015

We don't have much internet time so I just wanted to send a quick note for an update on our current travels now. We made it out of Impfondo safely. ...and saw God's hand clearly in some perfect timing of events regarding the delay and arrival of our plane that affected not only our family but an incoming team from Hong Kong. Hopefully I can share that another time as it is a testimony of God's faithfulness!

We are in Brazzaville until Wednesday night when we fly out to Paris then on to Frankfurt where we will spend some time with a good friend for several days. We look forward to celebrating Easter in Germany.

We are well and praise the Lord for our time in Impfondo and now for a time of rest and vacation before heading home.

Thank you for your prayer support. May God bless your Easter week as we celebrate the risen Lord!

Tim, Jenn, family

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April 5, 2015

Hello to all:

Just a quick note to wish everyone a blessed Easter!

We are thoroughly enjoying our time in Frankfurt with our friend and excellent host, Misha Wagner. He has kept us busy and entertained for sure, but most importantly it has been good to rekindle our relationship with this long-time friend and brother in Christ. It is beautiful here in Frankfurt and we have explored the city, climbed the steeple of the Dom (cathedral here -- hence the picture attached), had some excellent food and even went to a soccer game between Frankfurt and Hanover last night!

Today we are going to a church service for Easter morning, traveling to Bavaria to visit a castle there (apparently the one Disney world is modeled after), and then on to Munich for the night.

We will return to Frankfurt tomorrow, pack up, then leave on Tuesday morning for Toronto. Since the flight gets in later in the evening, we will spend the night at a hotel and come home to Westfield on Wednesday afternoon.

We are so grateful for all the prayer support from family and friends for our trip to Africa, and we are so blessed to have this stop over time in Germany.

May you all have a wonderful day celebrating Easter! We miss you all and look forward to seeing some of you soon...

In Jesus' name,
Tim, Jenn, and Family



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April 7, 2015

Hello all,

We are just about to board our flight in Paris to Toronto. It was a wonderful week with Micha! We left Zachary with him as planned. We were blessed not to have to pay the 75 euro per extra bag allowance (4!) as we were told we might have to due to our layover week in Germany. So far so good. We will be overnight in Toronto then a friend will be picking us up Wednesday around noon. We should be in the states around 4 pm or so Lord willing.

How all are well.
Love Tim

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April 7, 2015

Dearest Family and Friends.

It is a bittersweet time for us as we soar toward our re-entry to America as I write this on our flight over the Atlantic. Despite the difficulties and challenges we faced, or actually in part because of them, I have to praise God for a most remarkable adventure for our family. It is amazing to reflect on the last 3 months of our mission trip, which we just concluded with a heart warming time in Germany thanks to our excellent host and friend, Micha Wagner.

After 10 weeks at Impfondo, we sadly left our new missionary friends early last week. We were able to take time over several days before our departure to encourage each of the missionary families in their work for the Lord, and thank them for the chance to build relationships with them. The missionary team at Pioneer Christian Hospital (PCH) is such a special one, and they blessed us in so many ways. Please pray for them as a team, that God would do a marvelous work in them to bring unity in the body of Christ there as they serve the Lord with their God-given gifts.

Those of you who followed our email updates may remember Nadege, the young, 18 year old Aka pigmy girl whom our family 'adopted' during our time at PCH. This special relationship developed early on as a result of her extensive personal needs being unmet by any of her own family. We basically became her 'guard de malade' (caretaker) while she was under medical treatment in the hospital, and the Lord used that role to teach us several lessons of faith, especially in the area of agape love in the face of harsh realities. As our time came to a close there, we did our best to prepare for her care following our departure to help avoid feelings of abandonment and arrange for her practical needs to be met as possible. Zachary donated some of his funds toward the building of a new home for her, and Jenn and the three children were able to be part of the actual final stages of mudding that hut! Mama Sarah, our local 'Mother Theresa', was instrumental in diligently pushing along its construction so we could help move her in before leaving, and she has arranged for local church members to visit daily and ensure her needs are being met. Unfortunately, although the timing was very close, it was not possible for us to actually move her in to the new home. Instead, our family, on the morning of departure, went to her hospital room with Mama Sarah and Simone, a local Aka pigmy Christian. He had selflessly provided much practical care for Nadege alongside of our family, and thankfully will be an integral part of her follow up care. In her crowded room we spent time sharing, praying, reading from the Lingala Bible we obtained for her, and shedding tears as we said goodbye. Our heart strings resonated with hers as she spoke in Lingala about the pain in her heart she felt at our leaving. With tears blurring our vision as we left the crowded room, we had to find peace in the knowledge that although she

has little hope for medical improvement in this life, she has a solid hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Savior. We will continue to pray for Nadege and thank God for giving us the opportunity to serve this dear sister in Christ, and know that we will see her in heaven one day with a resurrection body free of this world's imperfections.

Due to limited flight options, we had to spend two days at Brazzaville awaiting our flight to Paris last week. This proved to be yet another blessing to our family as we had the privilege of sharing that time with an Northern Irish missionary family serving at Impfondo with Ambassador's Football (ie. soccer), the Cuthberts. We enjoyed shopping trips to the African tourist market as well as to our first air conditioned actual grocery store in 10 weeks, delicious Congolese and not so Congolese meals, interesting and sometimes a little frightening taxi rides, an evening of juice and soda drinks on the edge of the Congo river overlooking the 'other' Congo's capital, a trip to the cataracts (a section of intriguing rapids on the river), and pleasant conversations with the Cuthberts. Not only was their presence a blessing of enjoyment but one of practicality as well, since Rob speaks fluent French, making our time there much more relaxing. We found that not speaking the local language was very isolating and often anxiety provoking, so having them with us was just one more way we felt God's watch care over our family. Thank you, God, for the Cuthberts!

The last major leg of our journey was a trip to Frankfurt to visit our good friend Micha Wagner. Interestingly, our friendship with Micha began in 1999 as a direct result of our first missionary trip to Kenya in 1998, so it is rather fitting and serendipitous that we had this opportunity here to visit him in his own country at the tail end of this our third missionary trip. Micha proved to be a most excellent host as he not only put us up (and put up with us) in his flat for the last five days, but he had arranged a full itinerary of activities as well. If he weren't such a fine physician, he certainly would do very well as an activities director at any five-star resort! He gave us a personalized tour of beautiful Frankfurt, surprised us with a family outing to a German soccer game (Frankfurt vs. Hanover), and drove us to Munich for an overnight to tour that city and visit a most amazing castle, Neuschwanstein, after which the Disney castle is modeled. Wow! Most importantly though, we were just so blessed to spend time with this long-time dear friend. The Lord has given him a gift of being able to enrich others in relationship, and he uses that gift so well.

We left Germany today and are en route to Toronto as I conclude this email. Zachary stayed behind with Misha as he has plans to explore Europe over the next couple of weeks. If you think of him intermittently, please pray for him as he travels.

We find ourselves changed by this adventure and hope that God used our meager offerings of service to enrich the lives of others in the name of Jesus as well. Thank you all for your support whether it be financial, prayer, change of schedules, or words of encouragement. It truly was an honor to have this opportunity to serve the One True God through this adventure, and to watch Him direct our steps as we acknowledged Him in all our ways, Proverbs 3:5,6.

In the name of Jesus,
Tim, Jenn and family

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April 8, 2015

To all our family and friends:

Thanks so much for the support you gave us on our trip. As we are now back on the same continent as most of you, and have ready access to email now, I would ask that

you resume contacting us at our normal email address. I really appreciate my sister's help with the email updates for us while we were in the Congo! Thanks Lisa!

Blessings
Tim