

## RWANDAN UPDATE

MacGregor Family December 2016



Dear Friends,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to one and all! What a year this has been, both for our work in Rwanda and in our personal lives. In the last 2 years we have had to move home 3 times and with landlords continually putting up the rent, we decided we could not continue with this uncertainty anymore. Thanks to a very kind supporter helping us with a very favourable mortgage rate we started hunting for our first House. The search is a bit less formal than in the UK with random guys helping you find a place and then contracts agreed directly with the home owners, with no lawyers involved. There were a few sleepless nights as we handed over large amounts of money, without 100% certainty that we would end up with anything. During the house hunt we looked at a lot of places, many we could not afford and the others we did not want to live in. After a few months we gave ourselves one last weekend to find a house and then we planned to change tack and try to buy land to build something ourselves. A prospect we were not looking forward to.



But praise God on that last day we came across a beautiful house, in the area we had really wanted to live in. As we looked at the house we were sure that it must be out of our price range, so when we left and told the owner the absolute maximum we could afford we did not really expect to hear back from them again. Surprisingly they called us the following day and confirmed they would accept our offer. During the process of buying you meet with the owners regularly and you get to know them quite well, at one meeting we found out why the owners had accepted our offer, which was well below their asking price. Some months before they had been at a Church service and a visiting speaker

told them that one day a Rwandan married to a foreigner with a child would visit their home and this is who they should sell their house to. Apparently others had come to buy the house before us (for more than we were offering) but the owners had held onto this promise and had been waiting so they could bless us. How amazing is that!!! It has not all been plain sailing with a sudden drop in exchange rates which tested our faith. Plus the house needed a lot of electrical and plumbing work, which with limited finances we are still working through. But even with these issues, the sense of belonging in this place is overwhelming and the house is large and has such potential to be used for so many wonderful things. We are excited to see what happens next.

Last month was a frustrating and confusing time for Azizi Life crafts. For a long time I had been negotiating to get a shop location in posh new hotel in Kigali. We felt this was the best direction for us to go in and after months of negotiations we thought we had agreed a good deal for all with the owners. Sadly at the last minute everything changed and it fell through, which did shake me up a little. But the crazy thing is this has been an excellent year for crafts with so much growth in sales that we trained (photo right) and took on a load of new artisans (we are up to around 400 now) and a new member of staff. So as the year ends I am trying to focus on that and look to future opportunities and, not get caught up on reliving the things that did not workout. I am sure valuable lessons have been learnt.



On an even more positive note this last month also saw a giant leap forward in our adult literacy program. At the beginning of the year we were working through all the red tape, trying to get funding and permission to start the program. At times I could not see us making our way through and I must admit I had almost given up. It was at that point, as I was stepping back, that everything fell into place. The money came in from a corporate donor in the US, we got the



teaching materials given to us for free, an expert teacher trainer, Kath, from the UK was passing by on holiday and offered to extend her time in Rwanda so she could help us set things up. Kath not only re-designed our budget so we could take on over 120 students (instead of the original 60) per year for very little extra cost, she also helped run our teacher selection, trained a member of staff plus two volunteers to become expert trainers and, then helped

them run the week long training program for the potential adult literacy teachers. Eight teachers have been selected (with 4 backups) and we are just finalising the locations in each village (we are hoping for at least 4 locations) for classes and student selection starts in January. The photo above left shows all the people that completed the teacher training.

Despite there still being some roof leaking problems at the Toddle Care shop location, the business is growing fast and gaining a great reputation. They now have two full time employees and a seamstress that works from that location. Ritah spends most of her time working with the artisans on new product designs and dealing with custom orders. October and November saw record sales and December looks like it will be great too. Although Ritah is not yet able to take a wage from the business it is really encouraging to see that the sales are more than covering all of the running costs. Our hope is by the time the shops next rent payment fall's due (Feb 2017 – we pay 6 months at a time) Toddle Care will have saved enough money to cover all those costs.



Keza is looking forward to meeting her new sister and, if you were to ask her she would tell you that her sister is still in her mum's tummy. Keza even selected her sister's name but we are holding off announcing that one until she arrives (due 15<sup>th</sup> January 2017). At two and a few months old Keza is a proper little character, her language (both in English and Rwandan) is coming on in leaps and bounds and she enjoys drawing, painting and play dough. She loves the new house and kept exclaiming on moving day that she was "so very, very happy." This is the first Christmas that Keza really has any idea about what is going on. Her highlight so far has been decorating the Christmas Tree, which we only got around to a few days ago.



### Prayer Requests

1. Please join us in thanking God for the provision of this wonderful house. And also pray for us as we take on the DIY necessary to finish off all the repairs.
2. Please pray for Azizi Life Experiences (the community based tourism program). There have been some recent changes in the Laws in Rwanda and we need to make sure we can meet all the new requirements so that we can keep operating.
3. Please pray for Ritah and the unborn baby. They had a check-up this week and both baby and mum are doing really well. We will be having the birth in Rwanda and although the medical profession is greatly improved it will be a bit different from our experience in the UK.

If you do want any more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me via my email, which is [tom@azizilife.com](mailto:tom@azizilife.com), or by regular mail to my postal address **PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga, Rwanda**. Also remember to visit mine or Azizi Life's or Toddle Cares page on Facebook or our websites ([www.azizilife.com](http://www.azizilife.com) or [www.toddlecare.com](http://www.toddlecare.com)) if you would like to see more photographs and details about the work we are doing.

Many thanks,  
Tom, Ritah & Keza