

RWANDAN UPDATE

MacGregor Family December 2017



Dear Friends,

In 1998 a car was born that started life in Canada but, when no longer wanted there travelled across the World to Rwanda, Africa and into our lives. Despite having the occasional trip to see the mechanic she has served our family excellently over the last 3 years. She took us to hospital when we needed, delivered products to happy customers and generally served when called upon without complaint. Today we celebrate our car as she has now travelled over half a million kilometres and, daily scrambles up the mud road on the hill outside our house, which is similar to a freshly ploughed field that has been compacted. She is not beautiful, her paint is faded and her upholstery is worn but she keeps on going and what a blessing she is. In our lives (particularly in the last 10 years in Rwanda) we have come across many people like our car, those who plod on, not flashy or fast but they continue to serve not for the glory or fame but because that is simply what they do and, I would like you to join us in celebrating these unsung heroes – what a blessing to the World they are.



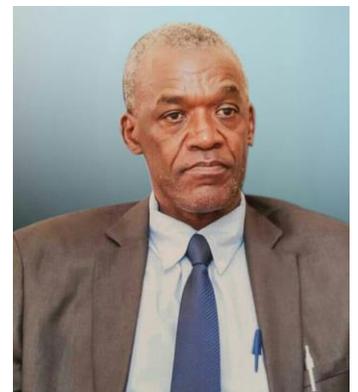
In September Keza (our oldest daughter) started Nursery School. The Nursery is in a converted house in a neighbourhood about a 10 minute drive from our house. It's a small nursey with around 30 children in total and there is only about 8 kids in Keza's class. Due to its location there is a great mix of Rwandan and foreign families represented and all the teaching is done in English. Keza loves school and has made new friends. In fact she never seems to want to leave when we try and collect her at home time (she is there from 8am till 1pm on weekdays).



Tona is now doing a mixture of walking and crawling and seems to be able to move immensely quickly when your back is turned. She is interested in everything and has a healthy appetite which has resulted in a couple of interesting snacks including what we think was some kind of grasshopper, various plants and chunks of a number of different playing cards and books.



The last month or so has not been easy for our family as we have each had various ailments, nothing too serious (tummy trouble, mouth ulcers and heavy colds) but it seemed like never a day went past without one of us being ill. Then sadly Ritah's dad also passed away. He had been ill for a while and in a lot of pain and so it was not totally unexpected but still heart breaking for those he left behind. He was not an old man, but his life had been a tough one, born as a refugee into a poor family, fought in the army that stopped the genocide in Rwanda and then involved in the massive task of rebuilding the nation from ruin. I do not think we will ever really comprehend the sheer scale of devastation that occurred in 1994 with more than 10% of the population dead many more brutally wounded with, homes, crops, businesses and infrastructure completely destroyed. It was my father in-law and men and women like him that bore the brunt of turning that situation into the Rwanda we have today. Our work most definitely stands on their shoulders.



2017 has been a good year for the whole of the Azizi Life group. The crafts business had some major challenges that they overcame and then got some great export sales, the community workshops attracted record numbers of visitors and we launched the newest social enterprise that sells Bee related products (Honey, Candles, Lip Balm and Soap). We also finally registered the



Rwandan non-profit (this runs all the community impact projects we do) and ran our first adult literacy classes in 6 different learning centres (150 people can now read & write). We launched a new website and built a training apiary (Bee Keeper farm) where we taught new bee keeping methods to community members. We also hired more employees (we now have a total of 16 full time & 20 part-time) and took on more artisan groups (a total of over 420 artisan). We are thankful for all God has helped us achieve and if you would like to

see more details on any part of our work please do check out our website's www.azizilife.com and www.beeutifulcreations.org or facebook pages. One of my favourite days of the last few months was when we took Keza and her friend to do an experience day and spend time with the artisans. It was such fun to learn how to make mud bricks.

Toddle Care has also seen some wonderful growth, with the launch of a new online store and expanding their product range to include many more developmental toys and custom built nursery furniture. The last few months has been very busy for Ritah and her team as they have attended many craft shows and dealt with a number of larger projects for nursery schools and parents who were completely re-doing their children's bedrooms. All this means that Toddle Care has taken on a number of new artisans and kept everyone very busy; it is wonderful to see the impact all this extra work has created for our artisan partners. Plus there was even more celebration in December as Ritah's shop manager, Joyeuses, got married.



A few months ago, in an effort to secure a British passport for Tona I had a surprise trip back to the UK for an interview with the passport office. I am pleased to say that I got the passport plus whilst there not only did I have the chance to catch up with my friends and family but also had some wonderful meetings that have the potential to really impact our work in Rwanda in the coming years. I am excited to see how those all develop in 2018. We hope to come to the UK as a family in April/May next year and just last week in fortunate twist of events, I won a business class flight from Rwandair. Our hope is that we can convert that to a family ticket and see you all soon.

Prayer Requests

1. Please pray that the Azizi Life group & Toddle Care continue to have a positive impact on the lives of all who we work with, not just financially, but in every possible way.
2. Please pray that we are able to get everything arranged (at work and for Ritah's visa) for our trip back to the UK in April or May.
3. Every high temperature and illness you get in Rwanda is always a bit more nerve wracking as you fear it could be Malaria or Typhoid. Sadly we have not found a doctor (that accepts our local insurance) that we are happy with. We have tried a few recently but been very unhappy with their work. Please pray we stay healthy and find a wonderful Doctor for those times we do need to be checked out.

If you do want any more specific information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or regular mail (**PO Box 146, Gitarama, Muhanga, Rwanda**). Also remember to visit our our Facebook pages to see more photographs and details about what we are doing.

Much Love,
Tom, Ritah, Keza & Tona