

RWANDAN UPDATE

MacGregor Family October 2018



Dear Friends,

This year has been a bit of a roller-coaster with launching a new art studio, registering a new company, travelling to the UK, opening a carpentry workshop, dealing with a major staff issue, adapting to new tax law and looking to buy a permanent home for Azizi Life, along with all the normal admin stuff that goes with living overseas. Funny thing was I did not notice how all these individual things started to build up and began to affect my health. I did not feel any different to normal but then at the beginning of October I had a bit of a scare with pains in my chest and circulation issues. Idiotically on Friday night I looked online to try and self-diagnose which resulted in a very scary weekend until I could get to the Doctors on Monday. After a full check-up and blood test the Doctor said that I was suffering with stress. I knew we had been busy but to tell you the truth it did not seem any different from normal. I guess stress had been building for quite a while and so I suppose I had just got use to living with it, until my body finally gave in. Praise God that after some prayer, introduction of some exercise, turning off my phone more often and a few days holiday with the Earls, I am feeling totally well again. But it did get me thinking about how these things can sneak up on us. I did not even know I was under stress until something snapped. The world we currently live in is stressful and I am sure I am not the only person to have a lot going on, I am not a Doctor but talking about things and praying made the world of a difference for me. Maybe it could work for you too.



This year has been one of new beginnings. Not only did Beautiful Creations (our Bee Keeping project) get officially registered but they also took a part share in a new Shop in Kigali called Design Rwanda. We also launched the Azizi Life Studio in Kigali where we bring artisans to teach workshops and classes on various crafts. Both new ventures

started around April and are already covering their costs and continuing to grow. They also resulted in new jobs to man the new locations and more work for our artisans and bee keepers.

We celebrated the 10 year anniversary of Azizi Life. All the artisans, employees, volunteers and teachers were invited to celebrate with us. It was such a fun day with great food, energetic dancing and plenty of fanta. Our work in Rwanda is now providing support to more than 500 people and their families. It was so rewarding to hear the testimonies of the artisans, some whom I have known from before Azizi Life existed. Although this was a celebration of the past, it was also a time of looking forward to the future – there are exciting times ahead.

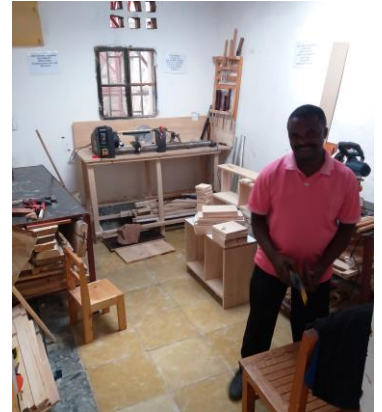


Sadly over the summer months we noticed a dramatic drop in Sales at the Kigali Boutique. After a full review we ended up replacing one person and I began meeting regularly with the all the shop staff. We set targets & we met weekly to talk about issues they were facing & to do sales training.



During this process the staff came up with a few ways to redesign the Boutique storage and display space. Since starting this process we have seen a dramatic increase in sales with record months for the last three. We are hoping to finish the year with over 10% growth, which is amazing considering how far we were behind. Along with the increase in sales in Kigali we have also had some wonderful export orders and also introduced a new Experience Day in the village – Pottery (photo). As all of our artisans are working very hard we have welcomed in a couple of new groups.

Things have also been moving forward with Toddle Care. Thanks to some generous donation when we visited the UK we were able to create our very own carpentry workshop at the back of our house. Through a mixture of You Tube and trial & error Ritah and the Toddle Care team have been learning how to work with their new machinery and are already seeing some great results. They have designed a number of new products and are busily working on new wooden toys ready for the Christmas rush.



Things are going well with our little family. Keza loves nursery school and Tona is becoming a strong and independent (almost) two year old. It is such a joy to watch them grow. Like all parents we face the daily challenges of baths, bedtimes and feeding but we also have to navigate the difficulties that arise from the girls different cultural back grounds. The neighbours are not mean or nasty, if anything they simply love them too much and in their excitement to greet and hug our daughters the over enthusiasm becomes quite scary. Most of the time the girls handle it excellently.

This last week we had the most wonderful pleasure to host Andy and Jodie (our good friends from the UK). They were only in Rwanda for about 6 days but we packed as much in as we could. We went on a Safari where we saw Lions, Giraffes, Hippos (in background of photo) and lots more, we did an Experience Day where we learnt how to make a traditional bee hive and dipped our own candles and we also visited Rwanda's first and only water park (although that title may be a bit too grand for what it actually is). It was great to spend time with friends, to relax and enjoy some great family time away from the hustle and bustle of work.



Prayer Requests

1. We have been asked to start our literacy program inside the Muhanga prison. There are over 700 inmates there who are unable to read & write, please pray we are able to help them.
2. Praise God we got some better medical insurance. Please pray we do not have to use it.
3. Please pray Toddle Care and Azizi Life continue to grow and improve people's lives.
4. Please pray for our girls living cross culturally.

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 Facebook pages to see more photographs and details about what we are doing.

Much Love,
Tom, Ritah, Keza & Tona