

MARCH 2022

We are currently in Northern Ireland where we have been since the beginning of December. So far, it has been a refreshing time to meet up with Louise's family who, due to COVID-19, had not had a chance to meet James (our youngest son). They also enjoyed seeing Jeremiah and Daniel again. We thank God for providing us with a house at Ballylinney Presbyterian Church for the whole time we are back. Ballylinney Presbyterian Church has a house they have set up for missionaries to use who are on home assignment.

Friends, family and partners made our coming back easier than we would have expected. There were so many gifts for the boys and ourselves, such as winter clothes, treats, toys and children's books. We are not far away from Belfast and that makes it easier to be able to meet up with friends and partners. The boys are enjoying the playgrounds and soft play places that are very uncommon in Nairobi.



Our home assignment involves many Sundays visiting different churches and catching up with as many partners in person as possible. This time we've had to work around nap times and bedtime routines as well as COVID-19 restrictions and considerations. The children keep us extremely busy with needing a lot of our time and energy, but we look forward to them growing together and being at similar stages throughout all of childhood.

We are grateful that we have a car which God has graciously provided through Louise's parents. That has made our movements easier as where we are staying is a bit far from some services. However, the twins (and particularly Daniel) suffer from travel sickness. This is even more the case when we drive on country roads. That means we are not able to commit to longer journeys (though we now have travel bands which seem to help him feel better).



We are in Kent/Sussex for three weeks from 24 February until 16 March to speak in our partner churches there before coming back to Northern Ireland. We head back to Kenya in mid-April.

We are often asked about the allergies the boys have struggled with. Thankfully, the twins have now pretty much grown out of all their allergies apart from a serious peanut allergy. James has suffered from the same allergies so we still have to be careful with dairy, soy and egg around him

but it was much easier the second time around, knowing what the likely allergens were. We know many of you have prayed for that and we really do appreciate it. Hopefully all Louise's research and trialling of foods will enable her to help some other mums in Kenya struggling with similar issues.

Living abroad often comes with many challenges of bureaucracy. Louise has been navigating the visa and work permit channels at exactly the same time as they have been moving from paper-based applications to online applications – which has come with the expected challenges. Just two days before we travelled we were given the permanent residency certificate (which we applied for more than two years ago!) so we praise God for that. It seemed likely that we would need

to wait until after we were back in April to get the physical certificate, but the staff were helpful in getting it issued for us in the time scale we needed. Louise's passport had been away for nine months when applying for a British passport for baby James! This took so long because of COVID-related delays. Louise will need to keep renewing her ID card but apart from that we hope there won't be any further need for visits to the visa departments. The boys have British passports and the Kenyan passports should be ready and waiting for us when we return to Kenya.

Living cross-culturally has its challenges and can become tiring when you are constantly thinking about your behaviour and your words from a cultural point of view. It is always very helpful to leave for a couple of months to get mentally refreshed and then go back with a clearer mind and more comfort that you are in the place God has called you to be. It's important to hold on to this truth about the Lord: *'The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?'* (Psalm 27:1).

Just a brief update on what is happening in Kenya. Since the education system was adjusted (because of COVID-19), the programme for 2021 completed in August. Since that ended, Duncan, Lewis and Lucy have all been working in different areas of the country, spreading awareness of the different programmes that iServe Africa runs – particularly TransformD and the apprenticeship programme (for university graduates). They have been seeking to recruit participants as well as looking for new placements where the apprentices can be placed to serve. Since TransformD has now been running for five years, we do not have to spend as much time on recruitment as we used to. Since we have had students from all over the country, we find that they, their parents or pastors recommend other students to come and participate. It is also wonderful to have an ongoing partnership with Compassion International (you may be familiar with the sponsorship programme) who work specifically with vulnerable children. They send a group each year to help prepare the students for their future life. We are excited to have our next cohort starting in May this year. We hope that will go well, especially given that Kenya will be going to elections later in August and sometimes the atmosphere can be disruptive.



It is always very helpful to leave for a couple of months to get mentally refreshed and then go back with a clearer mind and more comfort that you are in the place God has called you to be.

Prayer points

- Give points thanks that we were able to travel and that Louise was granted her permanent residency certificate just before we left. Give thanks for the provision of this house (and for how well it matches our needs) and also for the car we have been able to borrow.
- Give thanks for the joy of being reunited with friends and family who we have missed so much (especially through the children's early years of life). Give thanks for the refreshment of being at 'home' for Louise.
- Pray for the work in Kenya, and especially for the recruitment of the young people who will come and take part in TransformD May – August 2022.
- Pray for Kenya as we go into the election in August. Pray that there will be peace, justice and fairness.
- Pray for us as we continue to meet with partners and speak in churches. Pray for the children as they encounter so many new situations and pray for us to have patience and energy in what is an extremely busy season of our lives.