

## HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

Dear friends and family! Oh how we are thinking of you on this American holiday. How I wish we could gather with our family and count our blessings together. We have invited a few friends over, but I didn't dare invite too many because I am still not adept at cooking over a wood fire, and you always have to plan for power outages. Sure enough, when I woke up this morning the power is off. I put charcoal in the tiny grill in my fireplace for coffee, but cooking a large Thanksgiving meal on one little burner will be a challenge.

Don and I have settled into our work and are trying to accept life as it is in Africa. I miss having access to all the variety of foods and goods we have in our country. I could use a cup of Frappicino this morning! I wish there were a Starbucks around the corner! Heck, I'd settle for a McD's.

**DON'S WORK:** Don is assigned to do economic development projects in the wider area served by UCC churches. His projects mostly involve development of the mission stations (2) and clinics. He has secured start up funds for a chicken raising project that will help generate funds for the Hospital and the Orphanage, plus supply meat for the patients and children. There is also a mushroom project in the works. His big project will be to revive and reinstitute the station farm. (Why buy maize when you can grow it? We have the land, the tractor and the labor. We need a manager and some startup capitol.) Today he will travel to a partner clinic in Gwenzi to dismantle the windmill. Yes, dismantle it. It was blown over in the wind and until we can get repair parts we need to dismantle it and lock it up. Nothing is easy. In the meantime, Gwenzi clinic and school and residents don't have clean water.

**MY WORK:** I am settling into my job as hospital administrator. I spend a lot of my time scratching my head and saying, "How are we going to do that?" But we always find a way somehow. I try not to introduce "my" way of solving the problem, because most often "their" way is better. They've been at this a long time. One of my goals is to improve working conditions and patient care. I have met with the staff and told them I want this to be the premium hospital of the area. What we lack in supplies we can make up for in kind words, good care, Christian atmosphere and clean wards. They are very excited about that. The buildings are very old and run down, so one of the first projects is to do repairs. We have gotten the generator running. (Now to pay for the fuel!) We have done repairs to the medical waste unit and a contractor is working on the incinerator. We got an oxygen tank for every ward. We have fixed broken windows, repaired leaky faucets and are trying to get at least one working toilet in every area. We instituted a new fee structure and I am working on some grant proposals. Next will be 100 new mattresses, mosquito nets, diapers for the orphanage, an improved diet for the patients, a clothes dryer, capability to do general anesthesia, incentives and top-ups for the staff and a workable budget.

**LIVING REALITIES:** We love our little house. I get fresh flowers daily. Cala lilies, hibiscus ..We often have monkeys playing in our yard. I hope they don't discover my garden. The house is just the right size for us and they painted and renovated the kitchen and bathroom just for us. Don is thinking about adding a second bathroom. (About \$700 complete with tile and a

shower.) We have a "Twin Cab" truck that serves us well, albeit with a few rattles. We have a wonderful household helper who walks about 9 kilometers to work everyday. (That's over 5 miles!) He cleans, cooks, carries water, washes clothes by hand, irons them, "slashes" the yard (that's African for mowing the lawn), and hoes and plants the garden. (No rototillers here.) His name is Kumbarai. Very sweet man. Some of our challenges are:

(1) Communication. We have two cell phone networks but neither work in our home. We have to walk several miles to make or receive a call. We use an "air card" to access email and internet, which again involves a 2 mile walk and all the batteries charged at the same time (which requires power.) It has been fairly reliable, although sometimes the "network" fails us.

(2) Power. This is less of a problem than communication. We have adapted with the charcoal stove and charging our electronics when the hospital generator runs. (2-3 hours per day.) We have learned to keep our freezer iced and the water buckets full. We have a manual well nearby.

(3) Getting supplies. There is a town very near where we can buy basics. We can buy fresh tomatoes, onions, bananas, avocados and pineapples everyday. A bigger town is a 45 minute drive (@ \$5/gallon for petrol) but still very basic supplies. We try to get to the large community once a month - it's a 3 hour drive through the hot desert trying to avoid hitting the cows, ox carts, goats and people.

The people are wonderful, just as we were promised. They are resilient and helpful. Hitchhiking is the preferred method of travel. Word is out that I love bananas and a bunch shows up on my door quite often. I share them with the orphans.

I have a running partner (sometimes two or three) and a friend who lives about 6 K from me who makes me fried sweet bread with tea. Yum! We have neighbors whose baby pigs love our garbage. I'm hoping there's a pork chop in it for me!

The weather is beautiful! (Except when it rains for days and the walking paths are nothing but mud holes. No side walks. Only one street in the town. Our house does not have a road in front of it, only a path.)

We have been amazingly well adjusted with only a few tears: Yesterday when I heard American music playing in the grocery store, a few weeks ago when a baby died in my arms, and maybe today when I think about my family gathering without me. I was somewhat consoled when I was told it was snowing yesterday. I have on flip flops. I couldn't find a turkey or pumpkin, so it will be roast chicken (if the power comes on) and tropical fruit salad. Not so bad!

Please consider sponsoring a child at the orphanage. It the SOLE source of support for the 46 kids at the Home. Here is the email address: [lawrenci@ucc.org](mailto:lawrenci@ucc.org)

Happy Holiday and God bless you all!  
Maryjane