



UPDATE from MUTARE



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*...fan into flame the gift of God which is in you.
2 Tim 1:6*

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Dear friends and family,

For many of us, Christmas preparations involve decisions about gifts. The giving of gifts for this season is not as common here in Zimbabwe, but still many of us just seem to want to give something, perhaps in response to the 'indefinable gift' we have been given by God in the person of Jesus.



I recently received a gift from an elderly widow. She suffers terribly from a stroke and lives with 3 school-age grandchildren whom she supports. Young as they are, they have had to learn to tend to the gardens, plant the maize and carry the water. I know that food is not always very plentiful in this home.



Her gift was a small packet of dry beans. My first reaction was to tell her that she needed them more than I did. She begged me to take them – I'm ashamed to say, with tears- and knowing that in Zimbabwean culture, it's an insult to refuse a gift or kindness, I accepted them, and pray that God will give her back 'a hundred-fold'. I think that eating them will be difficult – except that I know it will make her happy! Perhaps many of us have had a similar experience.

*The apostle Paul pleads with his young helper Timothy to 'stir up the gift of God within you'. It's a gifting that every Christian has, a gift perhaps of service or ministry which can so easily be locked away or remain packaged and unused – like my beans. Using our particular gifts is a way we can 'give' back to God this Christmas. **Perhaps**, I will prepare the beans for **Christmas Day!!***



To be here teaching at Africa University is an incredible gift. Students from such varied countries and cultures constantly surround us. It is our privilege to be able to teach and encourage them.

L- Selam from Ethiopia with her gift of fabric from her country.

R- Students from Ivory Coast with their African suit gift for Larry!



Your gifts have helped not only us, but many of our students, be here. Thank you!!!



Resuscitating the small Intensive English lab has been so exciting for me as it's been my first opportunity to teach face to face for well over a year! The computers were a gift in honour of a young UMC pastor who passed away; the software has helped many students to improve their English.



Family News

Our children are gifts that have enriched our lives for over 34 years! We are happy that all of them (except Carly in Australia) were able to have a family Thanksgiving together, and though we won't see them face to face at Christmas, their messages, calls and, Skypes bring us so much joy. We hope to see all of them next year, either at Michael's graduation from Iowa State University in May or while we (hopefully) visit churches from June through September. We will keep you posted.

Larry's mother, Rita Ann Kies, was a gift to many- friends, 11 children plus grand-children, great-grandchildren, and other relatives. She was called home, at age 95, just before Thanksgiving; as we write this Larry is making plans to fly to Iowa for the funeral. Her love and deep faith were key factors in Larry's call to be a missionary.



Personally, at this time of year, I enjoy having the down time to paint, make cards, plan a Christmas Bible study for students and find a meaningful new Christmas song and scriptures to focus my thoughts on Jesus' birth. We will no doubt spend Christmas day with good friends, sitting around a table on a veranda and enjoying chicken and an assortment of vegetables, mangoes and lychees. We wish the same for each one of you as we celebrate the 'indefinable gift of God that we have in Christ Jesus'.

Please pray:

- *for blessed family time for Larry travelling home to be at his mother's funeral*
- *for widows and single parent families facing the challenges of raising young children and grandchildren*
- *for our many students who are unable to travel to their homes for the Christmas break*
- *for the search for a new Vice Chancellor for Africa University, and for the current leadership*

We hope you have plans for **Giving Tuesday**. Please consider:

- continuing your support of Jane. (Advance Special number: 107392)
- providing scholarship support for a student: (Advance Special: 3021028)
<https://umcmision.org/advance-project/3021028/>

Yours and His,
Jane and Larry Kies