

May 2013

I don't really *like* Elijah. Perhaps I'm being harsh – after all I've never met him (he lived over 3000 years ago), and the Bible is a bit scanty about his character and background – but from what is in the Bible, he's not a very *nice* person. I warm to him crying out to God for the life of a child (1 Kings 17:20), but on other occasions he comes across as a loud mouthed show-off (1 Kings 18:27) or a self-absorbed loner feeling sorry for himself (1 Kings 19:10). I don't *like* Elijah, but I've found myself thinking about him a lot over the last few months. His experience of highs (1 Kings 18:36-39) and lows (1 Kings 19:3-4) echoes our own.

Some of the highs have been tremendous. In February we were visited by a team from Red Cross Children's hospital in Cape Town who run the African Paediatric Fellowship Program (APFP). APFP trains paediatricians from all over the continent in Cape Town, but their funding has exceeded their capacity and they were looking for a satellite site. Out of all the places they work with in Africa, they picked us – testimony to the quality of our postgraduate training. Our first APFP fellow from Sierra Leone has now started training in Blantyre. The visitors were impressed with what they saw and are planning for more fellows, and even South African trainees to come.

Later in the same month, President Joyce Banda came to open the One-Stop Centre. She spent 80 minutes touring the facility, meeting the staff and some of our clients – a 13 year old who'd been gang-raped, a 10 year old abused by her step-dad for over 2 years, a 2 year old from a township in Blantyre whose mum was too scared to proceed with a case against a family member who'd abused her daughter. The President was visibly moved and spoke warmly and



passionately about what the centre does. Her visit was a real boost to the whole staff, and the work has continued to grow. Around 30% of all the cases we see result in the conviction of an offender – one of the best ways to protect the children we see.

In contrast the lows may not seem so bad – but their cumulative weight has been considerable and these last few months haven't been easy. Lilongwe (where we teach 3<sup>rd</sup> year students) has been a struggle with shortages in teaching staff and a constant battle to just keep the program going. At one point we were just a few days away from bringing the students back to Blantyre, but despite everything the teaching has continued. Our team in Lilongwe deserve a lot of credit for their hard work. In addition, the clinical workload has been tremendous. We expect January to March to be busy – it's rainy season and every year many children get diarrhoea or malaria. But on top of that we've had a lot of really ill children with bronchiolitis and we're in the midst of a typhoid epidemic. The wards have been bursting and all the staff tired. Furthermore, we've had to make some difficult decisions about the way our palliative care team is organised, and there's been long grant proposals to write, and there's been some nasty politics amongst senior college staff, and .... Etc!

In the middle of Elijah's story, we meet the much-under-rated Obadiah. I *like* Obadiah! In contrast to the bold / loud-mouthed Elijah, Obadiah is the faithful plodder just quietly and bravely getting on with doing God's work in the court of a pagan king (1 Kings 18:1-6). And in the last few months, we've seen God's helping us in the 'every day', routine aspects of our work. Our latest crop of postgrads took their part one exams, we've managed to raise much-needed funds for drugs and equipment, we've made progress in planning a new course to upgrade clinical officers next year. Encouraging visitors from the UK and Ireland have helped us to *just keep going*.

The high / low experience hasn't just been mine! Sara has been blessed with a lovely class this year – great kids who are fun and want to learn. But in March she had to deal with the sudden death of the young brother of one of her class. Her school (Phoenix) faced a crisis as a group of parents tried to overthrow the board of governors. Things got messy and the courts were involved. Thankfully, after a lot of uncertainty, common-sense has prevailed and the disputes were resolved. We thank God for the witness that Sara and other Christian teachers were to the headmaster and members of the board who aren't Christians. Their loyalty and care were noted and welcomed.

Even the kids got in on the high/low act! Ben is doing his GCSEs with the predictable mix of things that go well (Physics!) and stuff that's hard (Spanish!). Grace enjoyed taking part in the school production of 'Hairspray' but had no piano teacher for 4 months.

Despite what Elijah may have thought from time to time, the Lord reminds him that he was not alone in the work he was called to do. The Lord had hundreds (1Kings 18:4), even thousands of folk (1 Kings 19:18) who were with him. I was tactfully reminded by a friend a few days ago that I hadn't written an update for a long time. In all the highs and lows of the last few months, it has been good – actually it's been essential! – to know we are not alone. Thank you for your prayers.

Please pray for:

- The upcoming publicity / awareness campaign for the One-Stop Centre run by Tandu and her team of counsellors.
- Ongoing stamina to complete grants seeking funds for post-graduate education and to expand our 'Kangaroo Care' unit for neonates. Pray the grants are awarded!
- Sara's non-Christian colleagues. Pray that they will turn to the Lord.
- Ben doing his GCSE's and for decisions about A levels next year.

Finally just a reminder that if you didn't get a fridge magnet and want one, please contact the Killicks on [killicks4@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:killicks4@tiscali.co.uk) or +44 7717515757.

*Neil, Sara, Ben and Grace*

