

Out of Africa

Rains of Blessing Clouds of Danger.

Praise the Lord the rains have come. They were late but they have come and at times with huge displays of fireworks. We recently spent some time away from Dodoma with friends from the UK and one evening while enjoying a meal together on the beach watched lightening lighting up the clouds all around while curiously not a drop of rain fell upon us. The more I think about it the more I realise much of our focus has concerned water over the past few weeks. With these same two friends we spent some time in the Mikumi National Park and thanks to previous heavy rain and my urging Davina to drive a particular track we became immovably stuck in the mud with an hour to go to sunset. During that hour Angus and I became steadily more frustrated and very much more muddy trying to get the Land Rover moving again. With the light diminishing the four of us resolved to stay in the vehicle and await rescue. Praise and prayer was interspersed with SOS on the horn and flashing the headlights. At two o'clock the next morning two vehicles and four park rangers arrived. Even with all that manpower it was a further two hours before we were released from the grip of the quagmire. It is on occasions such as these when friendships are either really confirmed or fall apart. I am pleased to say that it was the former. Even within situations like this the Lord has a way of displaying his great love for us. At one point we were dazzled by a formation flying display of fire flies and when the clouds cleared we saw the whole vista of stars and planets in a pitch black African night sky. The Lord is awesome and his creation simply confirms it. For my own part, I totally enjoyed the experience and given the same conditions with the same people would willingly go through the whole thing again.

For those of you who have not experienced African rains I will try to give a flavour of them. Put simply, they are totally wet. There is none of this half hearted European drizzle. When it rains it makes a good job of it. There have been several occasions when it has started in the middle of the night and it is not long before it is so loud on the roof of our house that I defy even the heaviest of sleepers not to be woken. There have been times during the day when Davina and I have been outside enjoying the wind that often precedes rain to find ourselves in a dust storm then rain ten minutes later. There have been other times as we have watched a torrential downpour not a hundred yards away and remained perfectly dry. One day flying back to Dodoma from Dar-es-Salaam I watched spectacular localized storms and saw waves of newly fallen water rushing down riverbeds and gullies filling areas with water after a year of drought. All of this is glorious and spectacular but can be dangerous.



So the drought is over but the famine is not. There will remain many hungry people in Tanzania until this year's crop has grown. It will be July or early August until that occurs. Ironically, the coming of the rains has made the famine more acute for some people. Many of the roads are difficult to use or totally impassable. It was not long ago when a flash flood swept way a bridge between Dar-es-Salaam and Dodoma cutting us off for a time. It is in just these

sorts of conditions that delivering food by aircraft to isolated villages comes into its own. Thanks to substantial donations from Christian organizations in three European countries we have been able to bring food relief to all the small villages that are served on our evangelistic and medical safaris in Central and Northern Tanzania. The Cessna Caravan aircraft is able to carry about a tonne of maize on each trip. However, a tonne does not go very far with so many people in need. The picture above shows the turnout when maize was delivered on the Haydom Safari last month.

I hope I have given you an indication of the importance of the flying at the moment and also a feel for the unpredictability and severity of the weather. All of these things came together last week when as part of the Haydom Safari one of our aircraft crashed while landing at Haydom. The aircraft was in the process of transporting MAF personnel to our Easter conference. There was, including the pilot, nine MAF Tanzania staff onboard. Davina and I were two of them. During the approach, suddenly the forward visibility deteriorated in very heavy rain. Unable to see ahead the pilot started to overshoot but during this manoeuvre realized he had hit something. It turned out to be the trunk of a tall sisal plant. Not knowing what damage had been done to the aircraft he continued the landing. This damage, weather conditions and the state of the runway made it impossible for him to control the aircraft and it ran off the runway and through dense vegetation causing substantial damage to the plane but the Lord upheld his people and we all walked away shaken but unhurt. Miraculously, the plane stopped just before a line of trees. Friends have just pointed us to Psalm 34 today and we believe that it is very pertinent to us, those onboard and the Tanzania Programme.

As you can see the aircraft is in a sorry state. We are now without one of our Caravans and will be for some time to come. Coupled with the fact that there is a severe shortage of fuel for our Cessna 206's, (rationed to five and a half hours flying a week for all three aircraft) we are now very limited to what can be done in the near future with our scarce assets. As a programme we have decided to concentrate our efforts on food delivery, safari flying and medical evacuations. We thank the Lord Jesus for his safe delivery of our staff from very real danger but none the less feel there is a very substantial spiritual dimension to what is happening to MAF Tanzania.



Could we please ask all of you to pray for:

Healing for any mental scars in people connected with the crash.

Continued protection of our precious staff and aircraft.

Our ability to continue to serve the people of Tanzania.

A replacement Caravan to be available as soon as possible.

Avgas (fuel for the Cessna 206) to be readily available again throughout Tanzania.

Of necessity, I have not said much about us but we are much better than fine and resting in the Lord's protection knowing we are where he wants us.

God bless you all, Alan and Davina.

And this is the meaning of the stone:

A TRUSTING LIFE WON'T TOPPLE

Isaiah 28:16 (The Message)