



Tom and Verity Clare

Link Letter no. 11 | April 2023

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Location: Uganda



What we do: Tom works to improve the health of locals and refugees. Verity looks after our children and hopes to work in peacebuilding or teaching English.

Hello everyone!

Rainy season is here in Uganda! And spring has sprung in the UK! With the end of one season comes the start of another...

The first rains of the rainy season always come after a long, barren dry season, as constant sweating and fretting gives way to the joy of fresh cooling rains.

The main focus of this link letter is to announce to you, our wonderful supporters, our decision to **end our time in Uganda and prepare to return to the UK**, and to try to explain the reasons behind our change in plans.

For over a year now, I (Tom) have been increasingly struggling with the reality of life here and the older two boys (Ezra and Eli) have also found it increasingly difficult remaining here, far away from their family. Let me try to explain a little.

My role here has always involved a combination of clinical medicine, training, administration and management. Each of these areas brings its own challenges, some expected and others less so. But by way of summary, I've found it hard to come to terms with the knowledge that I'm not doing the job well. This is mostly because I am not trained, experienced or passionate in the right areas to thrive in this job role. I don't doubt that I'm serving God the best that I can, but my best here feels a long way from what it used to be.

Alongside the challenge of the working role, I've also found it hard at times on a social and personal level, including challenges with language-learning, developing local friendships, concern for Verity and the children and the constant identification as an outsider.

For the two oldest boys, most of the problems seem to have come from being away from family. They have always been very close to their grandparents on both sides and to other family members. Ezra talks quite maturely about his desire to be near family, to support them and to play and share life with his cousins. For a long time over this last year, Eli felt unable to speak to family on Zoom, instead going to his bed to cry alone. This increasing awareness of family absence has presented itself in their behaviour as increasing frustration with elements of the local culture and has worsened with each return to Uganda.



The garden has come alive again with the first rains of the rainy season.

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



We have some amazing colleagues at the diocese and in our expat community, holy and thoughtful in their ministry and on fire for Jesus. Our children have learned so much that it's hard to quantify and they have made some really great friendships. Verity and the three younger children continue to thrive and enjoy the richness and flexibility of life here. I have been able to serve a good number of patients, with God using me on more than one occasion

to bring a life-saving intervention and many less-dramatic but still-significant therapeutic blessings. We have been blessed ourselves in so many different ways.

Having acted on God's established call on our lives to serve him here, we have strived to serve him faithfully. We have wrestled with these challenges over a long period, pressing on and praying for God's strength in our weakness. We have tried changing my diocesan working role and tweaking the way in which we communicate with family in the UK to help the boys. We have continued to submit to God's sovereign will and seek him for his wisdom. At what point should a difficulty to thrive for some of us lead to a change in environment? How do we respond in unity when some of us are thriving and others aren't?

Well, after talking and praying through the issues again over recent months, we feel that God is now saying that it is the right time for us to go back to the UK. It is earlier than we had initially planned and in many ways it feels like we haven't finished what we set out to do. But we also know that God is leading us and has always been faithful to us up to this point.

So we will be returning to the UK in July. We are praying that God will provide the right place for us to live, as well as a single school with places for all four(!) primary-school-age children to go to in September.

We will continue to work with CMS for a further six months and they encourage departing mission partners to split the time equally between church visits, preparing for next steps and holiday.

We want to thank you all so much for your prayers and support during our time in Uganda. Looking back on our time here, we are overwhelmed with thankfulness to God. We are thankful for the beauty of the sunrise. We're thankful for the inspiring example of hardworking local women and the faithful, Christ-centred church leaders with whom we've worked. We're thankful for God's provision for us as a family at every stage and for the many friends, family and church members who saw our calling and supported us in prayer and financial support. We're thankful for our children and the great blessing they continue to be to us and others around us. We're thankful for many more things than we can succinctly list here. Most of all we're thankful to God who sees us, who knows us, complete with all our weaknesses and walls, yet still loves us enough to send Jesus as our rescuer.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Blessings,

Tom, Verity, Ezra, Eli, Simeon,
Joel and Amara



Photos from top to bottom: Tom delivering vital signs training to Yivu Abea Health Centre staff; Verity's Wise Choices for Life class of over 300 pupils at a local school; Ezra (9) and Eli (8) with some of the football-loving neighbours.



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