

Christmas 2017

GIFTS



**“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above...” James 1: 17 (KJV)**

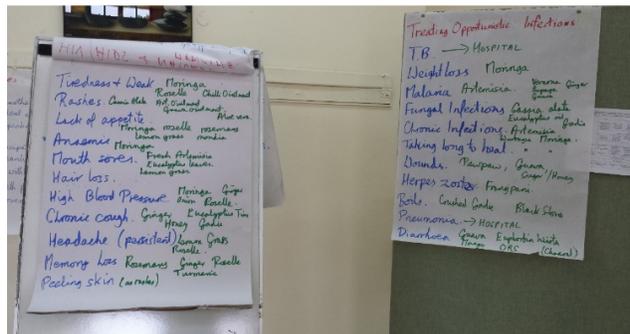
When children think about Christmas, they will often imagine the gifts that are waiting for them under the family Christmas tree. When this photo was taken in the village of Bukubwa this past October, the child in the photo was not thinking about gifts under the Christmas tree. He was watching the blue sky for signs of dark clouds that would bring the gift of rain to his parent’s small farm plot. Rains that will water the land and will provide food for his family in the coming year.

With much thankfulness to God in our hearts we can tell you that the rains did return for the short rainy season during October to December. There is now the promise of food and the health and the survival of this child’s family for another year. That is reason to celebrate as our African friends look forward to the end of 2017.



Phil and I returned to Canada at the end of October. I had planned my return to be available to help our daughter Stephanie and son-in-law Peter with the arrival of their first child. I arrived in Calgary, Alberta just in time for the birth of John Sebastian on October 31. Our first grandchild weighed in at 9 lbs and 14oz and was delivered safely by caesarean section. We praise God for the gift of a healthy grandson and the good recovery that our daughter has made.

Phil made his trip back to Canada with me when we received word, 2 days before my scheduled departure, that his 87-year-old father had suffered a heart attack. Since returning to Canada, Phil has been able to spend a lot of time with his parents. His father had 5 stents put into his heart and has made a very good recovery. We thank God for the gift of good health for Phil's father and the modern medical technology that can make heart procedures less invasive and result in good health outcomes.



I am very excited to have taken a week-long course by ANAMED (Action for Natural Medicine in the tropics) in early October in Nairobi, Kenya. The course was a gift in understanding the medicinal properties of tropical plants grown in East Africa. It also included learning to prepare the different parts of the plants for medicinal use. Many people in the villages make use of these plants and will often turn to them first for treatments before they make the decision to travel to a far away health clinic. This course has given me deeper insights into the ways people in the villages make use of the natural resources around them. I was given seeds and a few small seedlings to grow some of the tropical plants on our compound in Mwanza. I still work with western medicine and will continue to do so, but this new knowledge is very valuable in the African context where we work.

With the good rainfall for the crops in our area of Tanzania, with new knowledge to learn and use native plants, with a grandson, and with the health of Phil's father, Christmas 2017 will help us reflect on God's good and perfect gifts to us. We are also reminded that we can't do what we do if it wasn't for the greatest gift of all... and that is the gift of Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the World that he gave us his one and only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Thank you, family and friends, for your prayers, encouragement and the financial support of our work in Tanzania. It is a blessing to serve the people of the Lake Zone area of Tanzania through the work of World Renew. We return to Tanzania Jan 9, 2018. We pray that God will continue to use the gifts, skills and knowledge He has given us to his glory in East Africa. May Christ's love light your way at Christmas time and always.

Blessings, Phil and Jannetta Vandenberg Global Associates World Renew, Tanzania