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FLORA STARTS KINDERGARTEN

First Day of School

WE CHRISTENED FLORA'S PASSPORT

We had a fabulous holiday in Dubai

Michele and Flora

SERVING IN KIGALI RWANDA AS AN EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

THINGS CHANGE

THINGS CHANGE AS THEY OFTEN DO AND THIS WEEK HAS
TURNED OUR WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

I wrote most of this newsletter last weekend when I thought I had all the time in the world.

Things quickly changed when last Monday morning I met with my immigration lawyer in Sydney and she told me that the timing for an adoption visa used to be three months and now it is up to two years. That would make Flora eight years old before she could ever step her little toes into the Pacific Ocean.

She gave me three days to make a decision and we met again on Thursday morning to confirm that yes we were going to apply for a Visitors Visa. So we currently have an application for a Visitors Visa lodged and in the system.

With the announcement on Friday that borders will open, our very specific prayer requests would now be that yes they will open and we would be able to find flights available, through countries that allow Rwandan passport holders, e.g. Rwandans cannot fly through South Africa. We are also prayerful that those flights would not be ridiculously expensive as we have heard stories that they have been. We would also be hopeful that home quarantine would also continue and we would be able to quarantine at home. I am fully vaccinated but with Flora only being five she is not vaccinated.

My lawyer is hopeful we should be home for Christmas, unfortunately I have learned to be more of a realist and I just wonder with 38,000 Australians registered with smart traveller to come home if we will even be able to find a flight. It would truly be a miracle if we could get home for Christmas. It will be three years since I have been home.

What does this mean long term - I think at this point I am only processing one step at a time and I wait to see what

the next chapter is in this story. Adoption and Immigration are both very complex beings.

Apparently you cannot ask specifically for which Visa you would like, they just issue you a Visa. We need a Visa that allows her to visit again, like a multiple entry visa - if you pray, please pray for a multiple entry visa.

For Flora to receive an Australian passport we are waiting for an investigation to be completed by the Rwandan Investigation Bureau, on the whereabouts of her father. Should they come back with they don't know where he is, then technically they will re issue the compliance certificate and grant us a full adoption, meaning no other family contact and she would be eligible for Australian Citizenship. While we wait for that confirmation we have decided to apply for the Visitors Visa to at least come for a holiday.

Please pray for calm hearts as we wait patiently on all details of this venture to fall into place. Pray for understanding for Flora as she processes a visit to Australia. Pray for financial means to allow this all to happen, flights, quarantining, visa fees, lawyer fees, covid test costs - it will be an expensive exercise.

Pray for God's perfect timing for us to visit Australia, for an impending transition to move to Australia one day and that will happen at just the right time too.

KINDER

Where oh where have
those years gone - here we
are in Kindergarten with a
nearly six year old!

SO FAR SHE LOVES IT - SHE'S ABSOLUTELY EXHAUSTED BUT
SHE LOVES EVERYTHING ABOUT SCHOOL.

Her Teachers name is Mrs Harkleroad and she proudly announces that she is the best teacher in the whole world - I gently remind her that she had Miss Black last year too and she's not bad in the stakes of best teachers in the world!!

While everything in me wanted her to start Kindergarten in Sydney, there's another whole piece of me that wants her to stay exactly where she is - in a school where she can learn another two languages, Kinyarwanda and French. She can attend school with other children who as she says are 'chocolate' like her and she can be exposed to other children who may have been adopted like she has. Here she blends in not stands out. Here she has friends she's known her whole life in her class. Here she has familiarity and a secure sense of self. For now we are here and we embrace every lasting memory we are making because when the time is right we will be coming 'home' to Sydney.

While she may have lost a shoe lace at school one day and Mummy was not impressed - she redeemed herself this last week and earned a KITES award for Integrity. We went out for ice cream and it was just the boost that this kiddo needed, now she is planning what she can do for the next award - and what flavour ice cream she will have next!

There is so much she tells me and so much of it that I just don't know what all to believe or not. It's a transition for me too this year because we were together 24/7 for over 18 months. I knew every conversation she had at school and this year I barely know the kids names in her class.

If you are someone who prays, please pray for this sweet girl as she has so much to process with her adoption and understanding why her chocolate mummy had to die. The impending move to Australia is also a huge transition she is processing and trying to understand - she told her teacher we were going this weekend, just for the weekend - there is so much that will be a huge shock to her. She continues to miss her Nanna and Pa incredibly.



21 THE YEAR SHE
STARTED HER
FORMAL
EDUCATION

Izabayo Flora



A woman with long blonde hair and a young girl with dark skin and braided hair are sitting on a large, dark-colored dolphin that is partially submerged in a blue pool. The woman is smiling and looking towards the camera, while the girl is looking slightly away. In the background, there are rows of red and green stadium seats, suggesting they are at a large indoor aquatic facility. The text is overlaid on the image.

WE BOOKED TICKETS AND WENT TO DUBAI

We had the best of times - we did everything!

We booked two weeks in Dubai and the day we were leaving, Rwanda went into lockdown so we booked a another week and decided even if we don't do anything in the last week except swim at the pool it would be better than coming back to lockdown.

At the end of that third week I went to emergency with abdominal pain and was admitted for a night in hospital with a 5 year old! It was by the grace of God that a family from Kigali that we knew were also in Dubai and they took Flora for the night and she came back to my

room the next day and entertained herself with the buttons to move the bed up and down as well as making puppet friends by blowing up gloves! It was certainly an interesting 24hrs. I had to go back to the hospital every day for 7 days to have an IV antibiotic. So our two week holiday quickly turned into a four week holiday and Flora got home by the skin of her teeth on day 29 of a 30 day visa

It was inevitable...

While I was always hoping to spend my 50th on Sydney Harbour, with Covid and all the challenges it brings with travel it soon became clear that I was going to be in Kigali for the actual day. So how did I spend the day, with a little group of three year olds, one wet their pants on me and another threw up on my foot - not how I was planning but here we are. We went out for dinner with friends whose daughter awls shares my birthday and we had great night all round.

The following night I thought I was heading out for drinks with a friend, who instead, organised a babysitter and threw a surprise birthday party for me - I had no idea until I drove up and saw everyones cars! Well I did drive on the wrong road - apparently I was supposed to come the other way but I got bogged on that road earlier that day so I went the bottom road.

Anyway she was so thoughtful and had prepared a video from all sorts of friends from around the world who sent video messages and it great to sit and watch everyones greetings. They made me laugh and cry and I truly felt celebrated by so many.



Flora is very excited that we both have a 5 in our numbers - me not so much - but I have lived to tell the tale and so far we have survived well!

Her world...

Some goodbyes will be harder than others and for these two significant men in this little girls life, she will miss these two like crazy.

Charlie on the left has known Flora since she was two weeks old - for four years he was my driver and he has been there for her immunisations, driven her to immigration and Dr appointments, carried her from the car to inside when she was sound asleep. He has laughed and cried with us, he's shared in the joys and the heart aches of life. He visited my Mum in hospital when she broke her hip. He doesn't have a lot of english but by golly we love him and there is so much more to communication than language.

Theogene on the right is like the big brother she never knew and always knew she needed. He plays with her like no one else - he supports her and cares for her. He bike rides with her and dresses up as a fairy with her - he is an absolute trooper and legend in every sense of the word - he is family - they are both family.



THANKS FOR CONTINUING TO PARTNER WITH US....

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. -Philippians 4:19

When I think about all the mission trips I have done and I look back on God's faithfulness over the years, I am always astounded but know I shouldn't really be. For over twenty years He has been providing for me and giving me testimony after testimony of His faithfulness.

Philippians 4:19 was the verse that was instrumental in my decision to serve in Mozambique in 2005 and here it is popping up again in 2021.

This morning I woke up to an email from my immigration lawyer who had attached a hefty invoice with her message. I nearly cried as I did some mental maths and added some flights and other crucials to any kind of travel these days.

My unexpected hospital visit in Dubai set me back some when I paid it all up front in the hope that I would be able to claim it back on insurance. Feeling somewhat disheartened and frustrated I logged into our online church in Sydney and desperately tried to take the thought of this bill out of my mind.

Some time late in the morning I was back on emails again and noticed an incredibly unexpected email from the travel insurance stating that they would in fact honour a refund - not totally but a substantial refund all the same - I just have to send them the original invoice - from Rwanda - hmmmm. I have asked them tonight to please consider a notorised scanned copy.

Anyway I am always blown away by God's faithfulness and His leading and going before me and it is absolutely no accident that I came to Rwanda when I did and that Flora is my daughter and so I need to trust in Him to make the path smooth for me to bring her home to Australia. I will never give up on this little girl and one day she will hold an Australian citizenship too.

Please let us know how we can be praying for you too and share your testimonies of God's faithfulness to you with us.